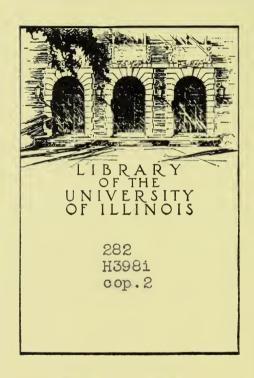
THE IRISH CATHOLIC COLONIZATION ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

SISTER MARY EVANGELA HENTHORNE, B.V.M.



ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

Tr. Lossey These Many Gangela, 13th



Digitized by the Internet Archive in 2011 with funding from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



THE RIGHT REVEREND JOHN LANCASTER SPALDING BISHOP OF PEORIA

President of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States, 1879-1892

THE IRISH CATHOLIC COLONIZATION ASSOCIATION

of the

UNITED STATES

Its Origin and Development Under the Leadership of the Rt. Rev. John Lancaster Spalding, Bishop of Peoria, President of the Association, 1879-1892

Sister Mary Evangela Henthorne, B.V. M.

PRINTED BY THE TWIN CITY PRINTING COMPANY CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

PRINTED IN U.S.A-

COPYRIGHT 1932

282 H 398i Cop. 2 TLL. HISTORICAL SURVEY

Dedication

To the memory of the leaders whose direction and encouragement made Irish Catholic colonization on the western prairies a possibility and of the pioneers whose courage and sacrifice made it a success, this volume is reverently inscribed, in commemoration of the half-centenary of their achievement.



Contents

Снар	TER PAG	GE
	Preface	7
1.	Irish in the Cities: Colonization as a Remedy	11
II.	IRISH CATHOLIC COLONIZATION ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES: INAUGURATION OF THE MOVEMENT (MARCH TO SEPTEMBER, 1879)	35
III.	PLANTING OF THE COLONIES (SEPT. 1879 - SEPT. 1880)	61
IV.	Subsequent Development and Dissolution of the Association (1880 - 1891)	81
V.	IRISH CATHOLIC COLONIES IN MINNESOTA AND ARKANSAS	03
VI.	O'CONNOR, GREELEY COUNTY, NEBRASKA	31
VII.	Spalding, Greeley County, Nebraska	63
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	89
	MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS	
	INGTON & MISSOURI AND UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD LANDS IN NEBRASKA (1880)	60
Сатн	OLIC COLONIES IN MINNESOTA (1880)	04
Сатн	IOLIC COLONIES IN ARKANSAS	22
Cent	MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS N & MISSOURI AND UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD LANDS IN SKA (1880) 60 COLONIES IN MINNESOTA (1880) 104 COLONIES IN ARKANSAS 122 F CATHOLICITY IN EARLY NEBRASKA HISTORY 130 COLONIES IN NEBRASKA (1881) 144 D'CONNOR, GREELEY COUNTY, NEBRASKA (1904) 154	
Catholic Colonies in Nebraska (1881)		
PLAT OF O'CONNOR, GREELEY COUNTY, NEBRASKA (1904)		54
PLAT	of Greeley Center, Greeley County, Nebraska (1904) 1	60
PLAT	of Spalding, Greeley County, Nebraska (1904)	80
Port.	ABLE HOUSE	48
Con House		66



Prefatory Note

HESE CHAPTERS on the Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States are part of a study of the career of John Lancaster Spalding, Bishop of Peoria from 1877 to 1908. Bishop Spalding was well known thirty years ago and is still remembered as an eminent churchman, educator, orator, and writer. That he was an ardent and successful promoter of Catholic colonization, however, is not so well known. Therefore, in the following summary of the history of the Colonization Association, of which he was President throughout the years of its existence, an attempt has been made to show just what was his contribution to the work.

Very little of the material necessary for this investigation could be found in books. Bishop Spalding himself, in his *Religious Mission of the Irish Race*, gives us a brief sketch of the purposes of the organization, and occasionally, in other books dealing with the history of the Irish in America, one finds references to it. But practically the only sources for the study were contemporary newspapers and periodicals, the historical societies of the States in which colonies were established, scrapbook material, and interviews with those persons who actually participated in the movement or were acquainted with those who did.

The newspapers that supported the Irish Catholic colonization movement most zealously and consistently and honestly were located and consulted: the files of the Northwestern Chronicle of St. Paul in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society; the Catholic Review of Brooklyn in the library of Villanova College, Villanova, Pennsylvania; the Irish-American of New York in the New York Public Library; the Boston Pilot and the Catholic Standard of Philadelphia in the library of the Catholic Historical Society in Philadelphia. Mr. Thomas F. Meehan, son of the editor of the Irish-American, assisted in the location of the files of that paper. It is also due to his direction that the Catholic Review was found at Villanova College and the New York Freeman's Journal at Notre Dame Uni-

versity. The discovery of the Catholic Review was particularly fortunate because the editor of the paper, Mr. P. V. Hickey, like John Boyle O'Reilly of the Boston Pilot, was a director of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association and therefore in a position to report accurately on the proceedings, hopes, and disappointments of the Association. Dr. M. L. Hansen of the University of Illinois had already discovered the Pilot. The files of the Baltimore Catholic Mirror are in the archival safe in the archepiscopal residence, and although the editors of the paper were not ardent in their espousal of the western colonization movement, its pages are enlightening. The same is true of the Freeman's Journal.

Among periodicals the Ave Maria of Notre Dame, the American Catholic Quarterly Review of Philadelphia, and the Catholic World of New York proved most helpful on this subject.

The best scrapbook materials that were made available through the generosity and courtesy of those possessing them are the collection of documents on the Catholic history of Nebraska which Monsignor M. S. Shine of the Nebraska Historical Society spent many years making and left in the custody of the Bishop of Lincoln; "upwards of a hundred scrapbooks" made by Wm. J. Onahan, the secretary of the Colonization Association, and deposited at his death in the library of Quigley Seminary in Chicago; scrapbooks kept by the authorities of Spalding Institute in Peoria from the date of the foundation of the institution by Bishop Spalding in 1899 to the present; scrapbooks kept by the Sisters in Spalding, Nebraska, and those in the possession of John Lancaster Spalding, nephew of Bishop Spalding, of Miss Marybelle Spalding, niece, and of Rev. J. B. Culemans of Moline.

Much local history was gathered in the libraries of the historical societies of Nebraska and Minnesota and from interviews with pioneers, Sisters, and pastors in O'Connor, Spalding, and Greeley Center. The present pastor of O'Connor recently replaced one who had been in charge for many years. Unfortunately, in the house-

cleaning that preceded the advent of the new pastor all the papers of the deceased were burned. This is particularly unfortunate because the collection consisted of an accumulation of material on the early history of O'Connor. Practically the same thing happened with the papers of Father Devos, pastor of Spalding from 1886 to 1904. Those of his that were not lost in Spalding disappeared later in Chicago when he moved from that city to California.

No pioneers were interviewed in Minnesota, but Judge R. D. O'Brien, son of Dillon O'Brien, more than supplied that deficiency. Dillon O'Brien was the greatest colonizing layman of Minnesota as Archbishop Ireland was the greatest colonizing bishop, and the two men worked together in the field for many years. Therefore, it is not surprising that the son of Dillon O'Brien understands Catholic colonization, and especially Irish Catholic colonization, thoroughly.

Everywhere the efforts made to secure colonization data were met with the most generous co-operation and the author of these chapters thanks most heartily the many whose manifest interest and invaluable assistance made such a study possible. Special acknowledgment is due Professor Marcus L. Hansen of the University of Illinois under whose scholarly direction the work was prepared and who gave it his unfailing interest and encouragement.



Chapter I

The Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States

THE IRISH IN THE CITIES IN 1879

COLONIZATION AS A REMEDY

The first of Bishop Spalding's great contributions to the welfare of his country and his Church was his promotion of the work of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association. His years in New York had familiarized him with the condition of the Irish in that and other great cities, and made him realize that their situation was crying desperately for attention.

From the first years of our national life, and even earlier, Irish immigrants had been forced by circumstances to locate in the large centers of population. While this seemed to offer immediate advantage, in the long run it was decidedly inimical to their best interests, individually and as a race.

During the nineteenth century various societies were formed for the benefit of the Irish immigrant, but the good effected by them was not sufficiently far-reaching, and therefore, although Irishmen contributed in no small measure to the development of the nation, it was undeniable in 1879 that because of the situation of the great majority of them in the United States, there existed evils that were serious enough to call for immediate redress.

Crowded and unsanitary housing conditions and hard, monotonous and poorly paid labor resulted in physical and spiritual deterioration. This in turn led to the frequentation of grog-shops and other places that bred vice and crime and brought untold misery to their victims and their families. Especially did the children and the aged suffer from this. Other evils that militated against the well-being of the Irish in the cities were partisan politics and the uncertainty of labor conditions. The situation may be summed up briefly as follows:

Throughout the period of colonization the American shores received a constant stream of Irish, either forced thither by an oppressive government or driven from their homes by famine, pestilence, and the ravages of unsuccessful warfare.¹ After 1793 the French War, the unsuccessful rising of '98, and the legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland drove others out, and the problem of caring for Irish Catholics in the United States began to appear.

Only incomplete data on the immigration prior to 1819 are available, but the results of the attempted estimates indicate that the influx of Irish was rather constant except for the complete stoppage between 1806 and 1815.²

In the twenties and thirties ships engaged in the timber trade between New Brunswick and Ireland carried immense numbers to Canada and left them there helpless. Gradually most of these, answering the demand for unskilled labor, passed into the States through New England or on American coasting vessels. Many stopped on the way and found employment in the cities and mill towns. The result was the first phase of what has been called the second colonization of New England.³

After 1830 cotton ships carried Irish emigrants directly to New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.⁴ The famine sufferers of the late forties, the Poor Law victims, and those suffering from the repeal of the Corn Laws in the years that followed flooded our seaport

¹ Bagenal, The American Irish, pp. 3-5.

² Ibid., p. 24. ³ Hansen, "The Second Colonization of New England," New England

Quarterly, vol. II., no. 4, 1929, pp. 539-553.

'Hansen, "The Second Colonization of New England," op. cit. These vessels also carried manufactured goods and therefore went first to northern ports from whence they turned south to Charleston and New Orleans for the exchange cotton cargo.

cities.5 There they found friends and relatives or at least the necessary day's wage on the public works and in the manufacturing and mining industries. Generally they dropped like tired migratory birds along the seaboard, utterly spent by the effort to reach it. Destitute of all things, and entirely unprepared in any way to move further inland, they were obliged to accept the first work that offered itself as a means of providing the immediate necessaries of life.

Various reasons have been assigned for this unfortunate situation of the Irish. Their poverty and inexperience, the lack of direction, either in Ireland or here, and their natural sociability were all contributary causes. A reason was to be found, too, in their unwillingness to go far from the Church. The experience of generations had taught them reliance on the priest and the need of locating near the church and school. Many who had preceded them and ventured into frontier regions had lost their faith and they were not willing to risk such a fate.6 Therefore, those who came in the first half of the nineteenth century settled close together and were encouraged in this by priests and bishops. Moreover, the great influx of the Irish (1850-1858) occurred at the time of the abnormal development of industry in the East. The Irish were caught and held by it, and when their kinsfolk and friends followed them they settled near them, for the reason that they were friends, and because it meant the ministrations of the priest, and because, as stated above. they, with rare exceptions, lacked funds and information to carry them further.7

⁵ Ibid., p. 548.

Guilday, Life and Times of John England, pp. 19-20.
The Germans and others were better provided with money than the Irish. Secretary Young of the Minnesota State Board of Immigration stated in 1879 that within eight months \$4,000,000 had been brought into Minnesota by immigrants. The number that had gone into the state was 40,000 and they averaged therefore \$100 apiece. Those with most means were the German and French; less, English; least, Irish. Many had from \$1000 to \$10,000. Seven from Germany arrived at one time with drafts for \$20,000; one came with \$9,000 and possessed property in Germany; it was common for them to have \$500-\$8000 with them.—Pioneer Press of St. Paul, Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook, 1879.

It has been said that the Catholic Church in Europe should have done something toward directing the Catholic immigration that poured into the country during the middle decades of the last century. She certainly met a dire and pressing need by sending priests and religious and by contributing to the erection of schools and churches throughout the new dioceses of the country.⁸ But the need of a directive agency was not met and therefore the history of Irish immigration particularly is a story of bitter tragedy.

There was no political organization in Ireland to look after the emigrants and so what was to be done for them must be done by the clergy. Maybe they were unable to do anything. Certainly when it was possible to live in Ireland they tried to keep the people at home because they were convinced that, generally speaking, it was better for them to remain. That, however, did not stem the tide of emigration and the Atlantic seaboard saw the death of the hopes of thousands of Irish who succumbed inevitably to the evils consequent upon impoverishment—physical and frequently spiritual deterioration.

This situation of the American Irish suited those who employed the man and woman to whom a dollar a day looked very large after a shilling or nothing at all at home, but that dwindled to invisibility when called upon to provide the ever-present need. It suited the tenement owners, too; but it crushed its victims.

In New York City their condition was worst perhaps, but in other cities, too, there was being constantly reiterated the lament of those whose honest attempts to help them met with frequent failure. The following is typical:

How illy they (our poor Irish) hold their own in the larger commercial centres; how easily they fall into snares, on all sides prepared for a trusting, generous and impulsive race—and how little buoyancy they evince when once down. . . .

⁸ This was done chiefly through the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons and the Leopoldine Association of Vienna.

God's providence in keeping so many of a race—rural in their own native land—in the large bustling cities of this country, will appear and become clearer to us in His own good time, and has, no doubt, its purpose in His plans and wisdom; but with the constant discouragement in the position I occupy in securing for the poorer Irish lads situations, and in keeping them in them, I am strongly led to think, whatever their past mission was, that their future in the cities is no elevated one, and their best interests, their brightest destinies appear in the direction indicated by the Irish Colonization Society. To be told by well-meaning manufacturers and mechanics —as I frequently am in my appeals for work for the many poor and neglected boys of the city—that they prefer other than Irish lads, indicates either a prejudice or the existence among our poor lads of no general mechanical genius or bent for skilled occupations. It further suggests that they have no fair start, with all their native quickness and keenness in the race of city life—at least as far as the artisan class is concerned. . . .

The excessive competition in all walks of business; the souldestroying struggle for place, power and wealth; above all, the demoralizing tendencies of the caucus system and partisan politics in which all too soon and too earnestly our people drift—and which gives to the conservative immigrant no honor that the ward bummer or hot-house politician cannot soonest grasp; all these things in my humble opinion work quicker and deeper injury on the impulsive. ardent, impressive Irish people than on any other.9

Truly in the light of the history of their immigration "the advent of the Irish should have been a failure," declared the editor of the Northwestern Chronicle in 1879.

Persecuted by famine and sword in the land of their birth, hounded by cruel landlords, watched by government spies, the Irish at last, latest of all European nations, flocked to the New World. They were not welcomed. "No Irish Need Apply!" was written on the very placard posted side by side with the announcement of the line of packets that brought them over. Although they had heard this country spoken of as a land of liberty, to say that they escaped religious persecution would not be speaking the truth. . . .

[&]quot;An Irishman," Catholic Union of Buffalo, (quoted in Catholic Review, June 7, 1879).

Yet they were true to the old faith. Quietly they refused to turn their faces toward the religious principles of their employers. Nobly they bore up, even under strong temptation, the universal reputation of the Irish race for the purity of its women. Patiently the Celtic peasant set himself at work to acquire a trade at an age when the average Saxon dreams of retiring from business. . . . Step by step they advanced. From the discarded meeting-houses of their opponents they now occupy temples of praise, which shall be witnesses to Catholic faith long after their builders lie under the greensward. The children of the men and women who then landed on these shores now (1879) occupy places at the bar, on the press, or in the avenues of trade which would honor any people. 10

John Morley, who could not be convicted of giving any undue credit to the Irish, wrote, in 1868, in a review of John Francis Maguire's *Irish in America*, "He conclusively establishes one thing—that there are Irishmen numerous enough, prosperous enough, and Fenian enough, to dissipate any impression on our part that we have only to deal with a handful of poverty-stricken rowdies." ¹¹

Victor J. Dowling, Justice of the Appellate Court, gave to the New York World in 1911 an amazingly long list of prominent Irish physicians, lawyers, judges, educators, publishers, authors, musicians, dramatic producers, and historians, who, during the nineteenth century had contributed to the building up of New York and the spreading of the name and fame of the great metropolis of the East.¹²

A writer for the Westminster Review for 1890, in an endeavor to show England that since political, commercial, and social relations were then being developed between her and America it behooved her "to take cognizance of the existence and importance of the large Irish American element in the United States," and to make friends with it, ventured to state that unquestionably our Republic was deeply indebted to its Irish citizens, because with their "large

¹² Undated clipping, Onahan Scrap Book,

Northwestern Chronicle, February 22, 1879.
 Fortnightly Review, February 1, 1868, p. 220.

numbers, high social standing, and great places of trust" they had "contributed to her glory, added to her commercial greatness, refined her social taste, and assisted in laying the foundation of the real happiness of her people, the real security of her laws, and the influence of her civic virtue which more than anything else give power and permanency to a nation." ¹³ He admitted that they owed their power and success principally to their own exertions and repeated the controversial assertion that the "rebel force" of 1776 was one-half Irish, and that "through Ireland and Ireland solely was America lost to England." ¹⁴

In 1894 John Paul Bocock, writing for the Forum, bewailed the "Irish conquest of our cities." Only in the smaller cities of New England and the South did he find "an interesting continuance of the habit of electing members of the substantial old American families to office," and he was somewhat relieved to find that at least Milwaukee and Cincinnati were still German-American strongholds. Although the death-rate of the Irish in New York exceeded that of other nationalities he yet found that in 1886 one-seventh of the entire population of that city was of Irish birth.

In his list of prominent Irishmen, that he finds appallingly long, are city chamberlains, mayors, judges of police courts, members of Congress (happily only a few), criminal judges, superintendents of police force, presidents of board of police commissioners, police officers, sheriffs, county clerks, health commissioners, tax collectors, fire commissioners, excise commissioners, aldermen, city treasurers, city attorneys, corporation counsel, chief of police and chief of detectives (even in Cincinnati) and commissioners of public works (in Milwaukee also).¹⁵ The number of police officials in the United States was so great that "a congress of them would exhibit a stalwart

^{13 &}quot;The Irish-Americans: Their Position and Influence," Westminster Review, CXXXIII (Jan.-June, 1890), pp. 290-93.

¹⁵ His reflection that "it is doubtful if an Irish-American could have himself elected Governor of New York" is interesting.

array of Irishmen and a convention of their subordinates might chill the blood of the British lion. If there is ever an army needed to free Ireland, there ought to be no trouble to raise it, already uniformed, in the cities of the United States." ¹⁶ He concludes his jeremiad with the question, "How has it come about that the system of government so admirably conceived by the fathers has worked out so perfectly in national affairs and so poorly in municipal affairs?" ¹⁷

One answer at least was given by the Dublin *Irish Daily Inde-*pendent five years later when with the establishment of local government in Ireland, Englishmen were heard frequently to declare that
"Irishmen were on their trial." The *Independent* proved that everywhere in Europe and America—even in Ireland herself under the
ancient Brehon Laws and in the brief period of Irish legislative independence following 1782,—Irishmen had been tried as makers and
executors of the law, and, far from being found wanting, had proven
themselves gloriously successful.¹⁸

Still the fact remains that in 1879 the Irish of the great cities, of many of the mining regions, and of the mill and factory towns of the United States were desperately in need of assistance. The decade that was just closing was characterized by numerous colonizing enterprises. Individuals and groups, with and without direction, were seeking the cheap lands of the West—Mennonites, Lutherans, Hebrews, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Irish Catholics who had managed to accumulate from \$600 to \$1000. But the mass of this last group had been able to save but little, and that little had been used to tide them over the period of unemployment. They felt the "land-hunger," too, but they had not the means to appease it. This was one reason why a special organization was needed for their benefit. A second reason why the Catholic Church, through her

¹⁶ Bocock, John Paul. "The Irish Conquest of Our Cities," Forum, 1894, pp. 186-95.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Catholic Union, May 18, 1899, (Reprinted from the Dublin Irish Daily Independent. Onahan Scapbook.)

clergy and laity, owed them such help as she could give, lay in the fact that it was they more than the people of any other race who, out of their poverty, had erected churches and schools, and with unhesitating generosity, given priests to the ministry and religious teachers to the children.¹⁹

It was the Irish who were chiefly responsible for the revival and spread of Catholicity throughout the English-speaking world,²⁰ and the children of the race did not deserve to be abandoned to the evils that were crying for alleviation. There was no denying the fact that these evils existed, nor was there any point in denying it. It was the misfortune of the Irish that they could not get beyond the centres of industry. That great numbers of them succumbed to hardship and temptation was also a misfortune. That it was the Irish who were so conditioned was due to centuries of oppression at home that left the emigrant wholly unprepared for an advantageous beginning of his career here. He had no money, he had no trade, often he had no education, and helpless as all this made him, he was yet without guidance or material assistance except that given by relatives—poorly-paid operatives, miners, servants, and day laborers.

The pity of it is that this people than whom there is none more eager to learn, more ready to give, or quicker to respond to kindness, should have been so long neglected. When the Irish Catholic Colonization Association was inaugurated the editor of one Irish Catholic paper exclaimed:

Oh, that something like this were done before! How much misery and wretchedness and sin and sorrow and shame would be unknown today, if our good people who sought these shores in quest

¹⁹ Someone has explained this singular generosity of the Irish in America, manifested in the erection of religious, charitable, and educational institutions, on the ground that in their native land not only were such institutions not provided by a paternal government, but for centuries they were actually forbidden, even if they had been able, to provide them for themselves. Therefore, in this country they welcomed the privilege of meeting the need of funds for church and school, to which they have freely and uncomplainingly contributed millions.

²⁰ Cf. Spalding, Religious Mission; Thebaud, The Irish Race.

of independent homes, and who brought here innocent hearts and strong arms, had only settled on the land instead of crowding the large cities. Had they done so, they would now be largely independent, if not on the road to wealth and affluence, instead of being engulfed in the purlieus of degradation which is too often their fate in the town. Their children would be virtuous, intelligent and happy, instead of filling work-houses and prisons—a scandal to their race and creed.21

True, some attempts had been made in the United States to meet the need of the Irish immigrant. In 1737 forty "Gentlemen, Merchants and Others of the Irish Nation" in Boston banded themselves together into the Charitable Irish Society of Boston that had for its purpose the relief of their indigent countrymen.22

In 1790, at the instigation of Mathew Carey, the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland was organized in Philadelphia, and in 1812 a similar society came into existence in Savannah, Georgia.23

With the great increase of immigration after the War of 1812 other Emigrant Aid Societies were formed. The chief of these was the Emigrant Assistance Society founded in 1825 under the direction of Dr. Wm. Macneven, and intended chiefly to provide protection for newly-arrived immigrants and to direct them to employment. The descendant of this was the Irish Emigrant Society of 1841. For this organization, which was legally incorporated in 1844, Archbishop Hughes was largely responsible.24

In 1851 the Emigrant Aid Society was divided into the Irish

24 Ibid.

a Catholic Review, May 3, 1879, (quoted by Buffalo Catholic Union).

²² Meehan, "Emigrant Aid Societies," Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. v., p. 403. McGee, History of the Irish Settlers in America, p. 38. They carefully stipulated that this work was not to interfere in any way with the usual contribution of the members to the general needs of the poor.

At the time most of the people of Boston were Protestant and in this Irish society only Protestants were eligible to offices and committees. Evidently this prohibitary clause did not last long because in 1742 Catholics were members of the Society, and today they are in the majority on its roll.

2 Meehan, "Emigrant Aid Societies," Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. v., p. 403.

Emigrant Society and the Irish Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank.²⁵ The former continued the work as originally outlined, and after the establishment of the Board of Emigration of the State of New York at Castle Garden in 1847 the president of the Emigrant Aid Society became *ex officio* a member of the Board and its agents were recognized officially in the landing depot. The latter engaged particularly in the work of transmitting money to Europe ²⁶ and securing passage tickets, exchanging money, and safeguarding the immigrants' material interests generally.²⁷

The Hibernian Benevolent Society was founded in Chicago in 1848 and the United Sons of Erin in 1858. Not only did these societies send help to Ireland; they also looked after the orphans of Irishmen in America and endeavored to promote a feeling of brotherhood among Irishmen of Chicago, no matter from what part of Ireland they had come. They dispensed many thousands of dollars, but when the Ancient Order of Hibernians came to Illinois in 1865 the local society was absorbed by it.²⁸

The Hibernian Benevolent Immigration Society, organized by

²⁵ Ibid., undated clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

²⁶ Undated clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

Between 1851 and 1887 the society sent \$30,000,000 to Ireland without a penny's loss. These contributions came chiefly through servant girls who, incidentally, were those who contributed most to the building of churches, schools, hospitals, etc., in this country.

²⁷ In 1876 the law that established the New York Emigration Commission was declared unconstitutional, and the Federal government assumed the responsibility of caring for the immigrant. Castle Garden was abandoned and the United States landing station established on Ellis Island under the supervision of the Treasury Department. Emigrant Aid Societies are given every facility for carrying on their work here. In the twenty-nine years of its operation the New York Commission collected \$11,231,329 from immigrants as "head-tax."—Meehan, "Emigrant Aid Societies," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. v., P. 403.

²⁸ Chicago Daily Journal, April 21, 1852, Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

[&]quot;It (the United Sons of Erin) died an honorable death. We sent all the funds that remained in the hands of the treasurer to Parnell, to be used by him wherever he thought it would do the most good."—Times Herald, October 20, 1875. Onahan Scrapbook.

Bishop Quarter of Chicago, was an advisory and directive agency, though timely charity was given also when needed.²⁹

One of the most interesting projectors of emigrant aid was Bryan Mullanphy, son of John Mullanphy, the "noblest Catholic St. Louis has known." The father came to St. Louis from Ireland in 1804, was pioneer merchant, shipper, shrewd yet ever just man of business, and far-sighted public-spirited citizen.³⁰ The son, Bryan,³¹ is the founder of the famous Mullanphy Fund. St. Louis, as the center of the national highway, received many derelicts of the great immigration of the forties. These Bryan Mullanphy aided in life, and when he died in 1851 he left a will, one clause of which reads thus:

One equal undivided one-third of all my property, real, personal, and mixed, I leave to the city of St. Louis in the State of Missouri, in trust to be and constitute a fund to furnish relief to all poor emigrants and travelers coming to St. Louis, on their way, bona fide, to settle in the West.³²

As a result of prolonged litigation the city of St. Louis, in 1860, became owner in trust of one-third of the Mullanphy Estate, whose heir is the needy wayfarer.³³

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has devoted itself to the helping of immigrants, especially through a free employment bureau,

²⁹ Thompson, Diamond Jubilee of the Archdiocese of Chicago, p. 26. ³⁰ O'Hanlon, Life and Scenery in Missouri: Reminiscences of a Missionary

³¹ Bryan Mullanphy was the first graduate of St. Louis University, 1830. ³² Meehan, T. F. "The Unbreakable Grip of a Dead Hand," *America*, September 8, 1928.

³³ Meehan, T. F. "The Unbreakable Grip of a Dead Hand," America. September 8, 1928. Some of this property was in New York. That state decided that the city of St. Louis was not authorized to hold a charitable trust and the New York property was divided among the Mullanphy heirs.

and the New York property was divided among the Mullanphy heirs.

In 1865, \$74.00 was used by the city of St. Louis for emigrants and \$26,431.16 for expenses. Between 1861 and 1917 the immigrant who "rapped at the door of St. Louis asking for his inheritance was recognized just 50,787 times." The amount used to assist him was an average of \$.99 at each call, totalling \$253,767.53, while the income from the estate was \$1,961,541.42, the total expenditure being \$1,950,650.66.

a placing-out bureau for orphan children, and a summer fresh air home for poor children of the tenements.34

Nevertheless, for the newly landed Irish at the time of the great immigration of '79 and the early eighties there was little provision. Not only that; the condition of many of those already here had become so alarming that in public opinion, if not actually, they had come to constitute one of the "dangerous classes." 35

In June of 1879 the editor of the Chicago Times, in commenting upon the beneficence of the work of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association, took occasion to state bluntly that the curse of the Irish immigrants was that they halted in the cities, where, as he expressed it:

some of them toil their lives through as common laborers, without a hope of ever putting their own roof above their heads and with the mortification of seeing their children grow up in hunger, poverty and dirt, the girls to become hard workers like themselves and the boys to go to the devil as rapidly as possible. Others set up pot-houses, the devil-fish of surplus wages, and graduate as ward politicians with marketable influence, bringing disrepute upon all their countrymen.36

Among the evils that beset the Irish poor in 1879 perhaps the greatest was that source of untold misery, the cheap liquor of the grog shop. And yet even here we must not attach too much blame to the frequenter of the saloon. Bishop Spalding was as ardent a promoter of temperance as any, and he recognized fully the evils that follow in the train of drunkenness. He knew, too, that many of the Irish poor were addicted to the use of intoxicants, but although he did not condone their weakness, he considered it a disease as much as a passion.

In the ill-fed and wretchedly lodged populations of the great cities and factory towns the whiskey pest is endemic. Like the

³⁴ Irish American, January 31, 1903. ³⁵ Shea, "The Increase of the Dangerous Classes in the United States," American Catholic Quarterly Review, vol. IV. (1879) p. 288 ff. ³⁶ Catholic Review, June 28, 1879 (quoting from Chicago Times).

yellow fever, it is produced by local and atmospheric conditions. The weak body which is compelled to perform its allotted task finds at first an apparent increase of strength from alcoholic liquors, and the laborer readily persuades himself that a stimulant of this kind is necessary.³⁷

In portions of the Fourth Ward of New York City the population of the tenement-houses in 1864 was "packed at the rate of about 290,000 to the square mile," while even in London the density of population has never gone beyond 175,816 to the square mile. The descriptions given by sanitary inspectors of these habitations would soil a page intended for all eyes. People who live in this atmosphere and amid these surroundings must drink. The perfectly sober would die from mere loathing of life. At every step there is a low dramshop, and even the children acquire the appetite of their parents for alcoholic stimulants.³⁸

Some have explained the seeming proneness of the Irish to this vice by reminding us that when an Englishman succumbs to it he becomes sullen, a Scotchman slips away and conceals himself, but an Irishman goes out into the street and creates a disturbance, thus attracting attention to himself and his condition.

In Brownson's *Quarterly Review*, between 1846 and 1865, we find frequent articles relating to the social and political status of Irish-Americans. In one of these, in which he speaks of the very poor, Dr. Brownson writes:

Go where they are huddled together in wretched tenement houses, damp cellars, and unventilated garrets; in narrow alleys and blind courts, in the pestilence-breeding parts of our cities. You will find there poverty and dirt enough to frighten a Yankee half to death, but you will also find there a patience and resignation, a loving trust in God, a cleanliness of heart, a purity of life and conversation, that give the lie to that puritan notion, that vice and crime and poverty go together. It was there we first learned that divine lesson to respect poverty and to honor the poor. . . Drunkenness there certainly is among them, but less than there is among the pharisaic

³⁷ Spalding, Religious Mission, p. 96.

²⁸ Spalding, Religious Mission, p. 118.

yet respectable Americans. I have never yet seen an Irish sot, such as I was in the habit of seeing in my boyhood in New England villages, hanging around the tavern or store where liquor was sold, or to be had. . . . Intemperance is a terrible evil, but not so destructive to the soul, or to society even, as pride and covetousness.³⁹

However, the havoc wrought among the Irish poor by drunkenness was sufficiently serious to make it one of the prominent reasons for urging their migration from the cities to the land.

Then there was the cause of the children. "Humanly speaking, it was an accident if they turned out well or ill, the chances being naturally that they turn out ill because the odds of life were all against them." 40

Bishop Spalding was convinced that the best place for anyone, given the advantages of church and school, was outside the great cities. He did not hesitate to declare, "If those I love were rich, I should not wish them to live in the city; and if they were poor, and made it their dwelling-place, I should despair of them." 41 Practically all the Irish immigrants were poor, desperately poor, and through no fault of their own. They brought sound minds, strong bodies, and virtuous hearts to the United States, but they were inexperienced in city life, unskilled in the ways and means of earning a livelihood, generous, and unsuspecting. The occupations open to them were the most degrading and least remunerative. Poverty haunted their footsteps and crime lured them until great numbers fell victim to vice or disease and found a premature grave in an alien city. One terrible sequel to this oft-repeated story was the loss of the children. So many little waifs were cast adrift by the death and misfortune of parents that in one year alone (1866-67) a single

³⁹ Brownson, O. A. In this connection Dr. Brownson makes the following significant statement: "Much has been lost by the Maine liquor laws, which have compelled more to drink on the sly or to substitute opium for rum."

^{40 &}quot;Catholic Colonization," Catholic World, XXXI, (May, 1880) p. 273.

⁴¹ Spalding, Religious Mission, p. 100.

Protestant society of New York picked up nearly sixteen hundred of them and sent them to the West. 42

The death-rate among the children of the Irish poor, especially in New York, was higher than that of any other nationality. Bishop Spalding quotes the Commissioner of the Board of Health for New York as declaring that in two successive years death took nearly one-third of the total number before the first birthday.43 As one Irish woman put it: "'Twould keep you poor burying your children." 44

The inability of factory and mine workers to look after their families, the unwholesome atmosphere and associations of the tenements and streets, and the half-starved condition of the children all conspired to pave the way to the avenue of crime and degradation. The miracle is that so many escaped physical and moral disease. But even when they did, they nevertheless missed much, very much, that is the rightful heritage of childhood. They never knew what it was to enjoy real family life where "the father becomes the priest and the home God's sanctuary."

The paternal heart of Bishop Spalding always turned to the little ones, and grieved most over their lot. Not only were they homeless, but by the grime, the smoke, the noise, the ugliness, and the foulness of their dwelling-places and working places they were shut out from all the sights and sounds that delight the eye and ear of childhood.

Through all the changing year they see only the dirty street and the dingy houses. Spring and summer, and autumn and winter, enacting, as they pass over the great world's stage, the divine drama

"O'Brien, Charlotte, Undated Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.
Desmond, "A Century of Irish Immigration," American Catholic Quarterly

⁴² Morley, Fortnightly Review, February, 1868, p. 272.

⁴³ Spalding, Religious Mission, p. 118.

Review, XXV (July, 1900), p. 527.

In 1890 the average death rate of those of Irish maternity was 26.74 per thousand and of German, 18.77. The total average in the cities was 22.78 and of the Irish in New York City 32.2, while the German was 22. To learn that the crowded and unwholesome conditions of seaport cities were responsible the crowded and unwholesome conditions of seaport cities were responsible that it is a patricit. for that we have only to notice that in Detroit, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati the Irish averaged 17 deaths per thousand while the mortality of the Germans was slightly greater.

of God to soften and purify the human heart, come and go, and come again; but for these poor waifs no flowers bloom, no birds sing, no brook murmurs in the glade with the sunfish playing in its rippling waters. Not for them does the ripe fruit hang from the bending bough; not for them waves the golden corn. The love of liberty which Nature gives never springs within their breast. They are born in prison and will wear the chain of servitude. No possible school system can make good the lack of sunshine and pure air, and the large freedom with which the growing soul is clothed when it is permitted to fly, like the birds of heaven, through boundless space. where no barrier rises to hem it in except where earth and heaven meet, and this recedes before the advancing step. 45

Thus a great underlying motive for the work of Irish Catholic Colonization was the salvation of the children.

With the children we must class the aged and the infirm, insofar as all were neglected. Some have said that the Irish in America were improvident, excusing them for this on the plea that they never learned to save in Ireland, that the laws to which they were subjected for generations had driven from them all ideas of economy, ambition, and forethought. It is true that at home there was little inducement to try to save—it never meant the securing of comfort and ease for the future—but rigid economy was practiced because always there was the rent to be paid, and oftentimes the passage money to America or Australia. That the Irish could and did exercise thrift is abundantly proved by their history in New England, 46 Illinois, 47 and throughout sections of Iowa, Missouri, Wis-

Spalding, Religious Mission, pp. 94-95.
 Hansen, "The Second Colonization of New England," New England Quarterly, II, 1929, p. 550.

^{47 &}quot;Chicago's Irish Pioneers," Times Herald, October 20, 1875, Onahan Scrapbook.

Thompson, Diamond Jubilee of the Archdiocese of Chicago, p. 191.

Thompson, "Double Jubilee," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, III, 1920,

Onahan, "Irish Colonization in Illinois," Catholic Fireside, February, 1881, Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

O'Dwyer, "Irish Colonization in Illinois," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, III, 1920.

Spalding, in Catholic Review, June 14, 1879.

consin and Pennsylvania.⁴⁸ However, to save was an utter impossibility with the very poor of the United States, and when it was no longer possible to work because of the infirmities of age or sickness the only course left was to seek refuge in some home for the destitute. In Chicago in 1880 of the one hundred and four inmates of the Home of the Little Sisters of the Poor, ninety-seven were Irish.⁴⁹

Another source of untold harm to the Irish of the cities was politics. Someone has said that the first hour on the soil of the United States Americanizes the Irishman. In fact, no great transformation is required. The sons of Erin find here the freedom for which they have struggled through long centuries, and before they land they have identified themselves with American ideals. Besides, they never could be aliens to a government which their countrymen helped to organize and stabilize. From the time Charles Thompson from the County of Derry, as Secretary of the Continental Congress, wrote the first copy of the Declaration of Independence from Jefferson's draft, to the day when an Irish American Catholic accepted the candidacy for the highest office in the gift of the people, the Irish have figured prominently in the political history of the United States. The Declaration of Independence was first written, first printed, first published, and first promulgated by Irishmen.⁵⁰ Of the ninetythree Philadelphia merchants who in 1780 provided for the prosecution of the war and therefore the winning of independence by pledging their property and credit, twenty of Irish ancestry subscribed nearly one-half a million dollars. Nine of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence and six of the thirty-six framers of the Constitution were of Irish origin.⁵¹ Among the first Senators and

⁴⁸ Clippings, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁴⁹ Catholic Review, December 25, 1880.

⁵⁰ McGee, History of the Irish Settlers in America, pp. 79-62.

⁵¹ McGee, History of the Irish Settlers in America, pp. 83-85.

Representatives of Congress were four Irish-Americans,⁵² and since then their kindred have held an honored place in the national legislative halls and have contributed in no small degree to the betterment of city and state government.

Nevertheless, in 1879 the subjection of the Irish of the large cities to the influence of politicians was general enough to furnish one reason for their sincere well-wishers to endeavor to remove them to the West where they would be absolutely independent in their participation in the political life of the nation. They had come to America entirely unschooled in the science of political self-government, and although they accepted the principle of American democracy immediately and unreservedly, they needed the right sort of help for the adjustment of themselves to the proper exercise of their citizenship.⁵⁸

Much has been written about capturing or losing the "Irish vote," and many times in the closing decades of the last century the demagogue or ward politician sought to enlist the sympathy and vote of the Irishman by proclaiming himself his "friend." This was very properly resented by the Irish-American who realized how harmful and insulting it was to the people of his race and how unnecessary for Americans; 54 but the average Irishman, especially of New York, was slow to recognize the political corruption to which he was a party, and slower still to comprehend the selfishness of the aims of

⁶⁴ Cf. Roche, Life and Letters of John Boyle O'Reilly, pp. 127-28, for O'Reilly's sharp arraignment of the "friend to an Irishman" and the Irish-American "leaders."

⁵² Ibid., p. 87.

so Ibid., pp. 223-24. "Whether we may wish it or not, one-half of Ireland is here. We grieve that these laborious and obedient men were not possessed of a land of their own; you may regret that they possess already too much of yours. But whether we would alter it or not, they are here—here by the immediate action of British misrule.—Oh, believe me, American reader, ours are a people very teachable by those they love. Deal tenderly with their failings, they are a fallen race. Do not pander to their party prejudices, but appeal to their common sense and love of fair play. Do not make the weak, weaker, and the dependent, more dependent; but endeavor to fit them for equality as well as liberty, so that the land may rejoice and be secure in the multitude of its well-instructed children."

those who constituted themselves his "leaders." He was better off without either a "friend" or a "boss" in politics, and in the new fields of the West he would be relieved of both.

Closely related to the evils just enumerated, both as cause and effect, was the deplorable labor situation of 1879 that was the result of conscienceless industrial feudalism. The execution of two "Molly Maguires" had just closed another "chapter of the melancholy history of the coal region of Pennsylvania" and shocked Catholics into a realization of the imperative necessity of striving to remove the Irish Catholics from a situation so inimical to their spiritual and temporal interests.⁵⁵ It was hoped, too, that Irish Catholic colonization would serve as a partial remedy for the competition in the labor market that was at least one of the causes of the periodic distress that visited the working classes.⁵⁶

All these evils combined—grinding poverty with its poor and insufficient food, wretched housing conditions, unhealthful labor, mortality, especially among the children, and in too many cases, intemperance and crime; ward politics; labor uncertainties—made the condition of the Irish poor bad enough, but with the rising of the tide of immigration in 1878 and the prospect of an immense increase during the next succeeding years, it was imperative that vigorous and immediate action be taken in their behalf. That this work be made to assume a national scope was likewise recognized as important. The East and the West, the clergy and the laity, must join hands or nothing appreciable could be accomplished.⁵⁷

The idea of Irish Catholic colonization, even on an organized basis, was not new, nor was it unheard-of for bishops to engage in it. A few early attempts at group settlement were made by Irish immigrants, but these cannot properly be called colonization enterprises.

III, (1878) p. 746.

⁸⁵ Catholic Review, January 25, 1879. ⁸⁶ Cf. M.F.S., "The Labor Question," American Catholic Quarterly Review, III, (1878) pp. 744-45; Onahan, "The Catholic Movement in Western Colon-ization," American Catholic Quarterly Review, 1881, p. 444. ⁸⁷ M.F.S., "The Labor Question," American Catholic Quarterly Review,

The families simply removed to the same locality and there made their homes. Such settlements were made in North Carolina, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maine, and Kentucky,⁵⁸ but they all lacked the advantage of organization and direction.

In the first half of the nineteenth century colonies were established in Missouri by John Mullanphy and by an Ulster priest. The former, who brought families direct from Ireland met with failure; the latter, however, transferred Irish families from St. Louis and founded the successful settlements of Armagh in Franklin County and Downpatrick in Jefferson County.⁵⁹

During the same period the New York Irish Emigrant Association, under the leadership of Thomas Addis Emmett and Dr. William J. Macnevan, undertook to provide for systematic Irish colonization in Illinois by securing from the government the grant of a tract of land under specified conditions of sale and improvement. By 1819 hundreds of families had found homes in Illinois under the auspices of the association. Between 1830 and 1850 the number was greatly increased by Irish settlements along the line of the Illinois and Michigan Canal extending from Chicago to LaSalle. 1

Two pioneer western bishops, Mathias Loras, the first Bishop of Dubuque, and Joseph Cretin, the first Bishop of St. Paul, were the earliest Catholic prelates of the United States to recognize the necessity and possibility of systematic colonization of Irish Catholic immigrants. The number of Irish farmers in Iowa and Minnesota furnishes the strongest evidence of the success of the efforts of these two Frenchmen in behalf of the Irish.

Bishop Fenwick's colony of Irish Catholics in Maine and Bishop

McGee, History of the Irish Settlers in North America, pp. 26-41.

Lambing, "A Ramble among Historic Ruins of Fayette County, Pennsylvania," American Catholic Historical Researches, 1881, p. 33.

O'Hanlon, Life and Scenery in Missouri: Reminiscences of a Missionary

Priest, p. 147 ff.
O'Dwyer, "Irish Colonization in Illinois," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, III, (1920).

⁶¹ Onahan, "Irish Colonization in Illinois," Catholic Fireside, February, 1881, Onahan Scrapbook.

Byrne's in Arkansas were partial failures because both were disadvantageously situated. For such a colony to be successful it is essential that the settler find the soil easily productive and that at first he be able to earn a livelihood by working for others unless he have enough money to carry him over the first few months. In Maine farming was too difficult and the returns too small; in Arkansas the presence of slavery made labor for the white unremunerative and distasteful, and so, because of dissatisfaction most of the settlers went north to Iowa.⁶²

These individual efforts were productive of good results, but not before 1850 was there any attempt at nationally organized Irish Catholic colonization in the United States. In that year, "when fully a million Irish-born people were settled in the country," 68. Thomas D'Arcy M'Gee produced his *History of the Irish Settlers in North America*, in which he discussed the position and prospects of the United States, and stated plainly that he was of the opinion that the future of the race in America lay in the new western states. "The torrent of emigration from Ireland," he wrote, "must in a few years abate its force. Whatever we can do for ourselves as a people must be done before the close of this century; or the epitaph of our race will be written in the West with the single sentence, 'Too late!'" 64

Actuated by the desire to promote western colonization of his countrymen D'Arcy M'Gee, in 1856, planned and assembled what has since been known as the Buffalo Convention "for the purpose of encouraging Irish Catholics in the seaboard cities of the United States to remove to the western States and Canada."

At the meeting Mr. M'Gee read the Address of the Convention to the Irish Catholics in the United States and Canada, wherein it was stated that the intention was to ameliorate immediately and perma-

64 M'Gee, History of the Irish Settlers in North America.

⁶² Spalding, Religious Mission, p. 170.

⁸⁵ Desmond, "A Century of Irish Immigration," American Catholic Review, XXV, (July, 1900).

nently the condition, moral and material, of the Catholic emigrants and especially the Irish, who had been driven to our shore by oppression and poverty and forced by circumstances to remain in the seaboard cities. By an organized Catholic colonization movement the members of the convention expected to relieve the State of the fear of a pauper population, to advance religion by taking the masses from the cities and locating them in rural districts near church and school, and to benefit the individual by providing him with a home. They called upon all, rich and poor, native and foreign born, to aid in the great movement of Catholics to the western portion of the United States and Canada. They appealed especially to the Irish-Americans who should be directly benefited, asking them by the strong claims of kindred, blood, and creed, for their own sakes, from pity for their unprovided children, for the credit of the Catholic character, for the vindication of the Irish name, and for the removal of their reproach in high places, to act with them in good faith until they should be able to say that they had finally secured that independence that they had crossed the Atlantic to find. A strong appeal was made to those who were financially able to assist the movement and to others, priests and laymen, to encourage it.

Finally they sought for their enterprise

that invaluable episcopal sanction which never was withheld from any lawful effort to promote the well-being of our friendless and the poor. In the early days of Europe that same sanction gave to England her colonization, to France her government, to Germany her unity, and to all that continent its first pages of progress. We are now in our Early Days in America and both our hearts and our intellect instruct us to look to the same order for the highest sanction of good works and the warmest approval of arduous duties undertaken in a spirit of Christian charity. Conscious of no other motives than the best—proposing no other ends than such as our fealty to our respective governments authorizes—proposing to employ only such measures as are lawful, peaceful, and just—we presume to invoke the blessing of God on this work, for Whose greater honor and glory it is now deliberately undertaken. 65

⁶⁵ The Pittsburgh Catholic, March 1, 1856.

Episcopal sanction, however, was withheld and so the convention failed of its purpose. The opposition was centered in Archbishop Hughes of New York, who advocated the settling of the people on the land in what he considered the natural order, that is, singly and in families, and not under the direction of colonization schemes, which he distrusted. Especially did he condemn the Buffalo Convention because he believed that some, at least, of the participants in it were interested land-owners seeking to advertise their property. 66

No further effort was made to form a national colonization society until October, 1869. In that year William J. Onahan of Chicago and Dillon O'Brien of St. Paul succeeded in bringing about the Irish Catholic Colonization Convention that was held at St. Louis at the instance of the St. Patrick's Society of Chicago. Delegates came from most of the western states and territories. Mayor O'Neil of Milwaukee was chosen President and Mr. Onahan, Secretary, but the committee that was appointed to organize the colonization movement failed in its work and nothing was accomplished.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, so convinced was Mr. O'Brien of the necessity and feasibility of colonization that in the winter of 1878-79 he induced Mr. Onahan to join with him again in an endeavor to start a national Irish Catholic colonization movement. Their efforts and their enthusiasm for the cause were directly responsible for the calling of the national colonization convention that led to the organization of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States.

⁶⁶ Spalding, Religious Mission, p. 147.
67 Onahan, Catholic Register, March 24, 1900; Catholic Review, February 20, 1882. Onahan Scrapbook.

Chapter II

The Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States

INAUGURATION OF THE MOVEMENT

(March to September, 1879)

In the year 1908 when Bishop Spalding resigned his See in Peoria the papers of the country made the event the occasion for many eulogistic comments on his life and career, but no mention was made of his connection with Catholic colonization or the Catholic University until Mr. Onahan, who had been the secretary of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association from the date of its inception to that of its dissolution, and who, therefore, was best qualified perhaps to judge of the activities, general and individual, of the members of the organization, expressed his surprise over what he called this "curious omission of any reference to two important undertakings with which Bishop Spalding was conspicuously identified" and which he claimed "owed their existence and their subsequent success in a great measure—first, to his initiative, and secondly, to his powerful support and labors." Of the first Mr. Onahan wrote:

From the beginning Bishop Spalding was the life and soul of the Colonization Association. His boundless energy, his unflagging enthusiasm, and his inspiring eloquence aroused sympathy and excited interest in the work East and West. He pleaded for it in lectures; he wrote and published an interesting volume on the subject of colonization, and he took a practical part and interest in the organization of the Association. This was thirty years ago; it is now ancient history, and people in this strenuous age and life quickly forget.¹

¹ Undated clipping, Onahan Scrapbook, 1908.

That people do and did forget is evidenced by the fact that there is so little to be found relative to Bishop Spalding's work for Catholic colonization. He did not hesitate to assign Archbishop Ireland the place of honor in the colonization movement,² but in his (Bishop Spalding's) account of the beginning of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association ³ there is nothing beyond his evident familiarity with the purposes and history of the society to indicate that he himself was in any way connected with it. An occasional allusion to his interest and co-operation in the work appears in other books and in contemporary magazine articles, but from none of these would one be led to conclude that their authors thought the movement was in any way dependent upon him for success. And yet but for him, in all probability, the attempt of 1879 and the early eighties at nationally organized Catholic colonization would have met the fate of those of 1856 and 1869.

For some years before 1879 Bishop Spalding had been interested in Catholic colonization, but he had taken no active part in the work, and he was not in any way responsible for the calling of the Colonization Convention of that year. He did not even attend the convention. On the other hand, Archbishop Ireland and Dillon O'Brien had carried out a successful experiment in colonizing Irish-Americans in Minnesota,⁴ and it was they who again agitated the question of a national society for promoting the work more extensively. The rapid filling up of the West and the enterprise of land speculators roused them to the necessity of prompt action, so they enlisted the co-operation of Mr. Onahan, and at the meeting of the St. Patrick's Society in Chicago, January 20, 1879, he moved the adoption of a resolution looking toward a national colonization convention.

The prominence of the question of Catholic colonization and its

² Religious Mission, p. 174.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 181-200.

⁴ These settlements were successful. The Sweetman Colony and the "Connemaras" of the eighties were partial failures and served in a measure to discredit the entire Minnesota Irish Catholic colonization movement.

importance to the Irish people of America were discussed, and it was decided that Mr. Onahan's resolution be adopted and the convention called for March 17 of that year in Chicago under the auspices of the St. Patrick's Society.⁵ An announcement dated February 5 was sent to the various societies of the United States which had for their object the promotion of Irish colonization, inviting them to send delegates to the proposed meeting in order, first, to consider the best and most efficient means of promoting successfully Irish immigration to the land; secondly, to establish in the large cities central bureaus for furnishing necessary information to immigrants and colonists and providing means for their guidance and assistance and for their protection from imposition; and thirdly, and chiefly,

to initiate and form, if possible, a National Association to systematize and direct immigration of our countrymen, and which, through its resources and influence would be enabled to make it practical to bring within the reach of the poorer classes of our people the opportunity to become owners and cultivators of the land, and enable them to acquire comfortable homes in the inviting agricultural districts of the West and South; and forming finally a powerful standing auxiliary to the cause of Irish Colonization.6

The bishops of such dioceses as had no organized colonization society were requested to appoint and accredit delegates to the national conference.7

The call of the Convention was sent to all the Irish Catholic papers of the country and in stirring editorials they urged upon the people whole-hearted co-operation with the initiators of the movement. The Northwestern Chronicle of St. Paul sponsored the project from the beginning, as likewise did the Ave Maria of Notre Dame. Among the eastern Catholic papers that lent their support to the

Northwestern Chronicle, February 8, 1879; Catholic Review, February 1, 1879. Circular, Onahan Scrapbook, 1879.

cause, the most enthusiastic were the Brooklyn *Catholic Review*, the Boston *Pilot*, and the New York *Irish-American*.⁸ Week after week a generous portion of each paper was devoted to editorials and reports and correspondence on the subject.

Men who had been exerting themselves for years in the interests. of Catholic colonization contributed their share of encouragement to the Convention plan. Chief among these were Rev. Felix Swembergh, O.P., who had done much for the Catholic colonies of Kansas, and Rev. Stephen Bryne, O.P., who, for some years past, had been writing and lecturing tirelessly on the subject of Catholic migration to the West. Father Swembergh, in his capacity of founder of colonies, was peculiarly fitted to pass judgment on the new project. He had been witness to the general migration to the West and now he expressed his satisfaction that Catholics were manifesting interest in it, too. Most of all did he lay stress upon the needfulness of placing the enterprise on a business basis. He foresaw thanklessness on the part of those to be benefited, but he was confident that the principle of Catholic colonization was correct and must triumph. Father Byrne became a member of the Board of Directors and continued to be active in the cause. For many months the secular press had been publishing accounts of colonization schemes of speculators and land agents, and they, too, manifested considerable interest in this new development. For the most part this interest was friendly.

The Conference met as planned on St. Patrick's Day. William J. Onahan, president of the St. Patrick's Society, presided. The attendance was good. There were present many delegates from Iowa, Dakota, Kansas, Minnesota, and Nebraska, on and messages were

^{*} The Buffalo Catholic Union (e.g. May 3, 1879), the Pittsburgh Catholic (e.g. July 28, 1879), the Chicago Times (in Catholic Review, June 28, 1879), advocated the movement; the New York Tablet and the Freeman's Journal withheld their support (e.g. Jan. 1, 1881 and March 4, 1881); the Catholic Citizen of Milwaukee was not enthusiastic (Oct. 1, 1881).

Swembergh, F., Communication to Catholic Review, March 15, 1879. Northwestern Chronicle, March 29, 1879.

received from sympathetic persons who found it impossible to attend the meeting in person. Among the latter were Honorable Richard O'Gorman of New York, General James Shields, and Bishop Spalding.¹¹ At the invitation of the delegates Archbishop Ireland told the story of his Minnesota colonies and drew from his experience the conclusion that the Irish of the Pennsylvania mines, the New York dockyards, and the New England factories were adapted to farm life on the lands of the West.

The Convention accomplished its purpose. It adopted the colonization plan proposed by Archbishop Ireland and provided for an executive board which should draw up such plans as would insure effective and permanent organization. The seven laymen appointed to this board were John Lawler of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, Anthony Kelly of Minneapolis, H. L. Foy of St. Louis, John Boyle O'Reilly of Boston, William J. Onahan of Chicago, John S. Creighton of Omaha, and P. V. Hickey of New York.¹²

To provide for an equal number of bishops, Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul and Bishop O'Connor of Omaha were empowered to select five others.¹³ The personnel of this board was to be completed at once so as to be ready to meet on April 18 to adopt plans and publish them.¹⁴

Naturally the two bishops determined to try to secure for membership on the board, prelates who had evinced active interest in the work of settling Catholics on the land, so Archbishop Ireland sent letters, conjointly in his name and that of Bishop O'Connor, to Archbishop Williams of Boston, Bishop Hennessy of Iowa, Bishop Fink of Kansas, and Bishop Hogan of Missouri. The See of Chicago

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dillon O'Brien of St. Paul was so wholly engaged with the work of the colonies already established in Minnesota as to be unable to serve on this Board. John Boyle O'Reilly was the editor of the Boston *Pilot*, and Mr. Hickey of the *Catholic Review*.

¹³ Northwestern Chronicle, March 29, 1879.

¹⁴ Ibid.

was vacant at that time and they agreed to leave one place for its future incumbent.¹⁵

In his letter to Bishop O'Connor, Archbishop Ireland suggested for the board the name of Bishop Spalding who had been appointed to the See of Peoria two years before, giving as his reason for the choice that "living so near to Chicago and being an energetic, enterprising prelate, he might think it strange that we did not invite his co-operaton." He added that if Bishop O'Connor approved of this action they might, at their first meeting, if it seemed necessary, add the Bishop of Chicago, making the board consist of fifteen. He expressed the hope that the bishops assembled then in St. Louis would choose for the vacant See one of those already selected for the Board.

Evidently Bishop O'Connor did not approve of the suggestion regarding Bishop Spalding, because in a letter of April 10 Archbishop Ireland told Bishop O'Connor that at his dictation he had refrained from writing to Bishop Spalding, and that he was leaving the matter entirely in his (Bishop O'Connor's) hands, but he added that he was convinced that unless they had five or six bishops at the Chicago meeting the movement would be a failure. He urged upon Bishop O'Connor the necessity of impressing the bishops of St. Louis with the importance of the meeting and of their attendance thereat.¹⁶

Unfortunately the rest of the correspondence between the two bishops on the matter is not available. Seven months later, in a letter from Brooklyn,¹⁷ Bishop Ireland tells the Omaha prelate of the harm that had been done to the colonization movement by the latter's ex-vicar, whose false reports had been spread broadcast, producing an effect even upon Bishop Spalding. "But now," adds

¹⁵ Omaha *Diocesan Archives*, Archbishop Ireland to Bishop O'Connor, March 20, 1870.

March 29, 1879.

**Ireland, John, Letter to Bishop O'Connor, April 10, 1879. Omaha

¹⁷ Ibid., November 19, 1879.

the Bishop, "knowing the source of the information, he is fully converted to your report." This was written during the tour of the East by Bishops Spalding and Ireland in the interest of the Colonization Association and throws little light on the events of April.¹⁸ Bishop O'Connor had investigated the lands of Greeley County during the summer and reported favorably upon them. One can only conjecture the possibility of Bishop Spalding's having assumed at that time an unfavorable attitude and thus caused Bishop O'Connor to hesitate before accepting Bishop Ireland's suggestion. However that may be, and whatever action was taken to bring about the result, the fact is that when the Board met on April 18 there were five bishops in attendance: Bishops Ireland and O'Connor, Bishop Fink, Bishop Hogan, and Bishop Spalding.¹⁹ Archbishop Williams of Boston was favorable to the enterprise but was unable to be present. He wrote, "You may count on my good will and hearty co-operation in any good work for placing our people on farms in Catholic colonies." 20 By April 10 no response had been received to the invitation sent to Bishop Hennessy,²¹ and the Bishop of Chicago had not yet been appointed.22

The Grand Pacific Hotel of Chicago was the scene of the first as of practically all the subsequent meetings of the representatives of the Colonization Association. On this occasion John Lawler presided. Four of the laymen named in the meeting of March 17 were present. John B. O'Reilly sent a letter explaining that illness kept him away but assuring the board of his hearty support. He promised to devote his energies and those of the Pilot to the advocacy of the purposes of the Society, stating that he believed the great need of the East was information, and that the Society, through the press and

¹⁹ Northwestern Chronicle, April 26, 1879.

²⁰ Catholic Review, May 3, 1879. ²¹ Omaha Diocesan Archives, Letter to Bishop O'Connor, April 10, 1879. ²² Archbishop Feehan of Chicago and Archbishop Gibbons of Baltimore both became earnest supporters of the Association, and until its dissolution, served on the Board of Directors.

other channels, could give that. "We have hundreds of thousands who have saved a little, enough to settle them in the West. These, it seems to me are the persons to be assisted, not those who have nothing saved." ²³ This was precisely the view of the other members of the Board. They could not hope, at least in the beginning, to colonize those who were destitute of means, even if it were wise to attempt to do it. But they did aim to place persons who had saved \$250 or \$300 in as good positions in the West as, unaided, they could have secured with \$1000.²⁴

The meeting was notable in the first place because of its personnel, and secondly, for its achievement. Not only was it most representative of American manhood, but there was a peculiar significance in that assembling of bishops for the purpose of carrying out a policy directly contrary to that which twenty years earlier another bishop, the foremost leader of the Irish Catholics in America "felt the circumstances and the leaders of the day compelled him to adopt." ²⁵

As regards the work accomplished the editor of the *Catholic Review* spoke the mind of the Executive Board when he declared that it would have been disastrous had the assemblage parted without giving the project such shape as would recommend it to business men in those stages where it needed their co-operation and to the people of the country when the proper moment for their assistance and active participation should come.²⁶ Had it failed in its work the entire movement would have collapsed as surely as had that inaugurated in St. Louis ten years before.

That the convention did not fail was due chiefly to Bishop Spalding.

For a time after the beginning of their deliberations the difficul-

²³ Catholic Review, May 3, 1879.

²⁴ Catholic Review, June 28, 1879, (quoting The Graphic).

²⁵ Catholic Review, May 3, 1879.

²⁶ Ibid.

ties confronting the Board seemed insuperable. In fact, the hindrances arising from the conflict of state laws on organization, the dangers that threatened from those who felt their interests might suffer from the migration of factory and mine workers to the West, the prospect of opposition from churchmen of the East who might sincerely believe that it was better for the Catholics to remain in the cities, and finally the discouraging thought that probably those whom they wished most to serve would return only critical and even calumnious ingratitude, threatened for a time to stultify their efforts. External pressure had killed the convention of '56, internal weakness had rendered that of '69 fruitless, and now in '79 the paralyzing fear of failure seemed about to frustrate this last effort to accomplish a great and good work. It was then that the wisdom of placing Bishop Spalding on the Board was made most manifest. Mr. P. V. Hickey, as we have seen, was also a member of this Board, and we have his word for it that it was the young Bishop of Peoria who saved the day for Irish Catholic colonization.27 He it was who, at this first meeting, inspired the other members of the Board with a determination to face and overcome all difficulties and to take steps at once to organize an association on a strong legal and financial basis. This they did by providing for the incorporation of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States under the laws of

²⁷ In the Catholic Review, May 3, 1879, he wrote: "Had not one of the bishops, who with the position of a western prelate combines the experience of a missionary in one of the most thickly populated parishes of the East, at a critical moment cast, with his characteristic eloquence and vigor the force of his influence on the side of active organization for Irish colonization, it is not impossible that the fear of difficulties would have seriously hampered the Board."

Catholic Review, May 31, 1879: "Bishop Spalding was chosen chairman of the board of directors of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association. The honor is not without its burdens of responsibility and great labor. These Bishop Spalding is both able and willing to accept. It is an open secret now, that it was owing to his generous, able, and, we may add, truly episcopal and Catholic advocacy of the necessity and advantage of Catholic colonization that the first meeting of the colonization board was so successful. His position and reputation will bring great strength not merely in the West and in Illinois but also in the East to this supremely important movement."

Illinois as a stock company with a specified capital.²⁸ To secure the permanently Catholic character of the Board of Directors the stock was nominally subscribed for by the members present to be held by them until after the charter should have been secured from the state of Illinois.

It was necessary to arrange for another Board meeting, set for May 20, because of the interval that must elapse between the application for and the granting of the charter. The interim would also provide an opportunity for the Board to communicate with the bishops of the country and with prominent laymen, setting forth the nature of the work, its importance, and the hopes entertained of its success. Great reliance was also placed in the Catholic press.

The Ave Maria,²⁹ in expressing its heartiest approbation of the plan as outlined by the Association and congratulating its organizers on the great wisdom displayed in the simple arrangement whereby some of the surplus of the wealthy could pass, on undoubted securities, to the assistance of the needy, thereby enabling him to secure a home, calls this piece of financiering "the outcome of a far-seeing mind and a great, philanthropic and Christian heart," and adds, "Bishop Ireland of course, having had evidence of the good practical working of the colonization plan, very naturally recommended its extension, but the principal advocacy of the great measure came from the Right Reverend Bishop Spalding of Peoria, to whose strenuous exertions the present organized movement is mainly due." ³⁰

²⁸ In connection with the title assumed by the Association we may remark that at that time at least there was a synonymity between Irish and Catholic that was not exclusive of either, so, although the Irish Catholic Colonization Association was designed, as its name indicates, for the special benefit of one neglected race, Catholics of other nationalities applied for and received colony lands. Colonization was specially urged upon the Irish because they were the slowest to avail themselves of the opportunities offered, they as a class contributed most to crowded city conditions and suffered most from them, and they were considered by the colonization promoters to be the best material for the development of vigorous Catholic and national life in the West.

²⁹ Ave Maria, June 28, 1879. ³⁰ Ave Maria, June 28, 1879.

We may conclude then with those who were the best judges of the matter that Bishop Spalding's influence was an essential factor in the actual establishment of the Colonization Association—that but for him, in all probability, it would have collapsed even before it was organized.

As in that first meeting, so just as long as the Association continued to function, did Bishop Spalding lend it his whole-hearted support. It was a work that appealed to him because it meant the salvation of souls, the temporal well-being of a people, the extension of the influence of the Catholic Church in the United States, and the economic advancement of America. All those interests dearest to his heart were bound up in this work and into its accomplishment he threw himself without reserve.

Before the meeting called for May 20, a committee composed of Bishop Spalding, Wm. J. Onahan, and Thomas A. Moran, applied for a license to organize the Association as a stock company with \$100,000 capital in shares of \$100 each. This was issued by the Secretary of State of Illinois on April 23.31 To comply with the required forms of law the full amount of the authorized capital was subscribed by Bishops Spalding, Ireland and O'Connor, two priests and four laymen.32 The required report was made to the Secretary of State and the certificates of incorporation were issued. The society thereby became duly organized "to promote, encourage and assist the colonization and settlement of Irish immigrants and

³¹ Copy of the Articles of Corporation as filed in the office of the Secretary of State of Illinois. Secured from Mr. T. P. Lanigan of Greeley, Nebraska, January, 1929.

The Catholic Review, May 31, 1879, gives the date as April 29.

³² Catholic Review, May 31, 1879.

The Articles of Corporation cited above list the subscribers as follows: John Ireland, 120 shares—\$12,000.00; James O'Connor, 120 shares—\$12,000.00; John L. Spalding, 120 shares—\$12,000.00; James McGavrick, 40 shares—\$4,000.00; John Lawler, 120 shares—\$12,000.00; Anthony Kelly, 120 shares—\$12,000.00; P. V. Hickey, 120 shares—\$12,000.00; W. J. Onahan, 120 shares—\$12,000.00; and D. J. Riordan, 120 shares—\$12,000.00, said shares being later redistributed to other investors.

citizens upon the lands in the states and territories of the United States." 33

With the election of the Board of Directors on May 20 the formal and legal organization of the Association was effected. Nineteen directors were chosen, each to serve for three years, and three commissioners, Bishop Spalding, W. J. Onahan, and T. A. Moran, were named. Bishop Spalding was elected president ³⁴ and was reëlected each succeeding year.

On the Board of Directors were Archbishop Gibbons of Baltimore, Archbishop Williams of Boston, Bishop Ryan of Buffalo, Bishop Spalding, Bishop Ireland, and Bishop O'Connor, three eastern and three western prelates, an arrangement that should have been, and was, conducive to the best results to the Association.

About fifty persons were present at the public meeting held in the evening of May 20 in the Grand Pacific Hotel for the purpose of arousing general interest in the movement. Bishop Spalding in his address on that occasion, explained that the members of the Association were endeavoring to help Irish Catholics because they needed their help most and because the Society had the greatest facilities for aiding them. He emphasized the fact that the project was a business one organized on a sound financial basis though the intention of its promoters was to do good. They were only asking that those who were willing to co-operate with them would subscribe to a paying investment.³⁵ He declared that he was satisfied that the Association would accomplish much good, that the aim of the organization was to enable as many families as possible to make homes for themselves in the West and "to determine and mould the character of the districts yet to be settled." He placed reliance on the conviction that

³³ Articles of Incorporation filed in the office of the Secretary of State of Illinois. Catholic Review, May 31, 1879.

³⁴ Articles of Incorporation. The Dublin Freeman's Journal commended the election of Bishop Spalding, "one of the most energetic and eloquent of the American episcopacy." (quoted in Catholic Review, July 12, 1879)

³⁵ Catholic Review, May 31, 1879.

the Irish were natural farmers, that their exceptional strength, freshness, vigor, and purity of character, all of which they had retained in spite of centuries of oppression, fitted them for life on the farm and adapted them specially to be forerunners of Christian civilization. He believed that the maintenance of faith rested in large measure with the rural population of the country and that the best policy of the Catholic Church was to bring its members to the western farming lands. The Catholic poor in the industrial shops, the factories, and the mines, in the crowded tenement houses and the neglected streets of the large cities, could not, he feared, but become demoralized. while the new immigrants, unfamiliar with American politics and ever responsive to those who promised to be their friends, rallied to the call of politicians who were too frequently corrupt. In public life in the East the Irish served, generally speaking, merely as tools of those possessing or seeking power; in the West they would stand on their own merits and assume their rightful place in the city and in the state.36

Toward the end of May, the Catholic Review published a letter, supposedly from Judge E. F. Dunne of Salt Lake City ³⁷ to the Catholic Universe, in which the writer made the suggestion that the Colonization Association constitute itself a National Bureau of Catholic Colonization for this country and publish a quarterly pamphlet free. He would have had this periodical contain an account of the proceedings of the Society, advertisements of suitable places for settlement, reports of the progress of the colonies, suggestions and ideas on colonization, the history of other colonies, stating especially the reasons for their success, statistics of population, etc., names of states where it was proposed to locate colonies, historical memoirs

³⁶ Northwestern Chronicle, May 31, 1879.

This was the first of the many public addresses delivered by Bishop spalding on the subject of western Catholic colonization, and served its surpose in disseminating information regarding it.

³⁷ Judge Dunne was afterward engaged in Catholic colonization in Florida, but his venture did not meet with signal success.

of the different colonies, and notes and queries of those seeking information.38

Whether or not this proposition was adopted as suggested it is a fact that the Catholic papers, especially the Catholic Review, the Boston Pilot, the Irish-American, and the Northwestern Chronicle, published weekly articles dealing with nearly all the subjects listed; Rev. Stephen Byrne collected material directly from the bishops and pastors of the states which offered facilities for colonization and published it in book form; 39 the Association itself frequently distributed circulars among actual and prospective shareholders and settlers; and Mr. Onahan, the efficient and self-sacrificing secretary, became a well patronized "Notes and Query Department". During the first year alone he received more than 2500 letters of inquiry and application for aid and information. It is, however, a matter for regret that in the colonies themselves historical memoirs were not generally kept and that in the few instances where they were kept, they were subsequently lost or destroyed.

On May 21, the committee appointed for the purpose, namely, Bishop Ireland, John Lawler, and William J. Onahan, issued the *Address of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association*, a four-page pamphlet setting forth briefly the history and purpose of the Association ⁴¹ and an exposition of the great need of the work it had undertaken to accomplish. The concluding paragraph of the address con-

tained an appeal for co-operation:

We are confident that the needed co-operation will be given. We have full faith in the Irish Catholics of America—in their devotion to their race and to their faith. It is their ambition that the Irish immigration to this country shall prove an honor to the old land and a most useful element in the building up of our great Republic, and

"First Annual Report of the Secretary," Catholic Review, May 29, 1880.

1 Circular, Onahan Scrapbook.

²⁸ Catholic Review, May 24, 1879. ²⁹ Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Dakota, Viewed as Homes, for the Poor of All Nations and Especially for the Irish Laboring Classes.

it is only required to show to them that these objects can be easily attained, to secure from them most generous assistance.

There follows a list of persons and firms in all the large cities of the country through whom subscriptions could be registered. Would-be subscribers were advised that by the terms of one of the by-laws no shares would be issued or any money accepted until the full amount of the capital stock should have been subscribed by bona fide subscribers. Therefore the directors urged that no names be entered on the lists except those of persons who were able and willing to respond when the call for payment of the amount of the subscription should be made. At the end were listed the names of the members of the Board of Directors, of the officers, and of the Executive Committee.

Five thousand copies of this address were prepared and sent to the bishops and priests of the United States and published in the press of this country, England, and Ireland, and elicited most friendly and favorable comment. Although it did not bring in any subscriptions, it did arouse interest in the movement, especially on the part of those who saw in it the prospect of emancipation from a life of wretchedness. Particularly was hope born in the hearts of the poor who had been able to save a little but who knew that at each return of a time of depression their little hoard would inevitably vanish; it had happened many times, so often that most of them despaired of ever bettering their condition while remaining in the cities. It was this class of Americans that the society hoped to be able to help.

Early in June, immediately after the issue of the address, the three western bishops, who had taken upon themselves the chief burden of the work, proceeded to the East for the purpose of supplying information about the movement and enlisting sympathy and aid for it. At that time, many prelates were gathered in New York for

^{42 &}quot;First Annual Report of the Secretary," Catholic Review, May 29, 1880.

the dedication of St. Patrick's Cathedral, so Bishop Spalding took advantage of the occasion to call an informal meeting of the Board of Directors in the rectory of St. Stephen's Church. Archbishop Williams repeated to the gathering the substance of his letter to the first assembly in Chicago; namely, that he was heartily in accord with the movement. Bishop Ryan of Buffalo promised his co-operation, and Bishop Spalding announced that the Cardinal Archbishop of New York had placed upon it the stamp of his approval.⁴³ Under these favorable auspices arrangements were made for the calling of a meeting in the hall of the Young Men's Lyceum for the purpose of enlisting the co-operation of the lay Catholics of New York.

In his address to this assembly, over which Dr. McGlynn of St. Stephen's Church presided, Bishop Spalding explained the objects of the society which he represented and the purpose back of it; namely, the promotion of the best interests of the Catholic Church and the insuring of prosperity to the Irish people of America by sending large numbers of them to the farms of the West. In this, as in all his addresses on the subject, Bishop Spalding dwelt upon the terrible condition of the poor in the cities, the horrors of the tenement districts, the frightful mortality among the people crowded together there, and the deplorable moral degeneration that could not but result from such a condition; he spoke of the relief that would be afforded the large cities by the migration of some of the people; and finally, he assured his hearers that he and the other bishops were not coming to them as beggars—that every dollar subscribed to the Association would bring satisfactory returns to the investors.

On June 4, at a mass meeting held at Cooper Institute, New York, Bishop Spalding delivered his first great public speech on Catholic colonization. One wishes that those who reported his words had also given us a picture of the man who uttered them, and told us

⁴³ Catholic Review, June 7, 1879.

⁴⁴ Irish-American, June 7, 1879.

⁴⁵ Catholic Review, June 7, 1879, (quoting from The World).

more of his effect upon his audience. Perhaps in those days people were so accustomed to oratory—it was the era of the lectureplatform—that they took the orator more or less for granted. There was little written of the powerful pulpit oratory of Archbishop Patrick J. Ryan of Philadelphia and yet we are told that reporters always failed to do justice to his sermons because they were so carried away by his eloquence that they invariably caught themselves listening with rapt attention instead of taking notes,46 and that no reporter was able to take Bishop Spalding's speeches accurately because, once he was well into his subject, he drove on to his conclusions with a rush that left his audience breathless.47

What we do know is that this speech won the heart of New York and silenced for the nonce even the criticism of the New York Herald.48 The address was reported in full by the Catholic Review and record made of the applause elicited at various points made in it. In substance the Bishop told his auditors that the work was being undertaken for the Irish people, therefore for the Catholic Church, enunciating again his thesis that the Irish race, the only people of Western Europe who had adhered unfalteringly to the Catholic faith through the days of the religious revolution of the sixteenth century and after, were destined to be the instruments of its revival throughout the English-speaking world. In order to accomplish this their mission he believed that they should regain possession of the land in Ireland and obtain possession of it here. In all his lectures and writings on the subject he makes it clear that this is his fundamental reason for urging colonization of the Irish; it is the reason of a Catholic whose ancestors in England, in Ireland, and in America had sacrificed all that earth holds dear rather than relinquish the

⁴⁸ Irish-American, June 14, 1879.

⁴⁶ The story goes that one week the report of the Sunday sermon was particularly poor. On Monday the archbishop met the editor of the paper that had reported it and the latter remarked that he hoped the report was all right —that he had had a new reporter named Kilpatrick take it. The archbishop smiled ruefully and answered, "Well, he nearly did kill Patrick."

"Interview, May, 1929, Rev. Thomas MacMillan, Paulist.

priceless treasure of faith, and of a priest and bishop who knew the place the Catholic faith holds in the lives of those who profess it.

His secondary reason for wishing to send the Irish from the cities to the land is so closely related to the first that it is almost identical with it—the temporal and spiritual welfare of the Irish poor. At this meeting at the Cooper Institute his eloquence when he pictured the temptations to vice and crime that are inseparable from the life of misery of the very poor, the frightful mortality, especially among the children, and the little hope any of them could ever have of possessing their own homes or of being independent, aroused so much enthusiasm among his hearers that one who knew the great metropolis as few knew it declared that "the heart of Catholic New York was moved." 49

He did not encourage the founding of colonies in the South or the Far West. Competition with negro labor in the former section and Chinese labor in the latter was too severe. Moreover in the South lands had been cultivated long and so would yield sparingly and the climate was too hard on the average person; while beyond the mountains was the desert.

He tried to make his audience see how rapidly the West was filling up with Norwegians, Russian Mennonites, Germans, and Americans from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New England, while the Irish were taking up the exhausted farms to such an extent that New England was rapidly becoming New Ireland. "I do not congratulate the Irish nor the Catholic Church," he added. "I know what New England has done for this country and I appreciate it But where a Yankee has worked upon the soil for two hundred years, you know it must be a good deal worn out." The Irish should go West! In this plea he was thinking of the individual good of those who should go out onto the western farms and he was thinking too, of the contribution they would make to the upbuilding of the nation and the spread of the Catholic Church. The work had beer

⁴⁹ Catholic Review, June 14, 1879.

undertaken for the Irish people because they needed it, because they deserved it, because through it they would be best enabled to carry out what Bishop Spalding believed to be their religious mission, and because he was convinced that among no others could finer material be found for laying the solid foundation of democratic citizenry.

At the close of the meeting he explained the conditions of the loan he was asking American Catholics to make. He added that it was certain that the Association would not pay any dividends for two or three years, that it would take that long to get the people onto the land, get the crops in, and begin to collect money, but that in the third year they would declare a dividend which they expected to make equivalent to seven or eight per cent for the whole time. He headed the subscription list by handing in a card from himself.

The results of the Cooper Institute meeting were so encouraging that the *Catholic Review* could "thank Heaven that the day had come when only the enemies of the Irish and Catholic people such as the *New York Herald*, the owners of New York tenement houses and the projector of 4000 new tenement houses in Westchester county" were opposed to Irish Catholic colonization.⁵⁰

The editor of the *Tribune* called it a move in the right direction, and congratulated the Catholic prelates on being the first to advance he work to a practical stage. Although the writer considered 100,000 a very small capital for such an undertaking, he agreed with Bishop Spalding that for purposes of experiment it was enough, and stated his conviction that if the work were "promoted with the singleness of purpose professed by its distinguished patrons t could not fail of success within the limits of their means." However, his prediction that "under judicious management it would produce results sufficiently convincing to enlist fifty times that amount of capital in similar centers," did not materialize, not because

⁵⁰ Catholic Review, June 15, 1879, (quoting The Tribune). The Cincinnati inquirer even called the project an "awful trap for credulous emigrants." The 'ilot, April 2, 1879, (quoting The Enquirer).

there was anything faulty with the management within the society, but because of lack of co-operation from without. He saw but one defect in the plan. It seemed to him that only those who were able to get along without aid could afford to go West,⁵¹ but in that he was mistaken. Because of the reduction of railroad transportation rates for the benefit of the colonists, the preparations made on the farms for intending settlers, and the long-time payments allowed them, it became easier to go West under the auspices of the Association than to remain near the eastern centers with even a greater amount of capital.

Encouraged by their success in New York, the bishops accepted the invitation of Archbishop Williams to go to Boston before returning to their dioceses, and there addressed a large number of clergymen and laymen in the rooms of the *Catholic Union*.

Bishop Spalding at this Boston meeting, June 9, laid particular stress upon the need of inducing the Irish to go West and of assisting them to go.⁵² He told his hearers that thereby they would be conferring a benefit not only upon the emigrants themselves by directing them away from the temptations and poverty of the cities, but also upon the great body of the Catholic Church by increasing its strength and numbers. In his diocese there were many Irish Catholic settlements and he knew whereof he spoke when he stated that in the country ninety out of every one hundred families raise children, whereas his hearers knew only too well that among the crowded, unhappy, hopeless tenement dwellers only ten out of every hundred made a home. And again he comes back to the children, the tragedy of whose lives—and deaths—seemed to haunt him.⁵³

In the report of the sale of \$10,000 worth of stock at this hastily-

⁵¹ Catholic Review, June 15, 1879, (quoting The Tribune).

solution for the derived one 21, 1879.

Solution Later he derived one of his greatest satisfactions from the accomplished work in the thought of the little ones that he had been instrumental in placing in the sunny fields and fragrant woods and along the streams of Nebraska and Minnesota. See poem "Not All in Vain," God and the Soul, p. 165.

called meeting, the Boston *Pilot* announced that already steps had been taken to purchase land for two colonies, one in Nebraska and the other in Minnesota, adding that in this scheme at least there was no "ring,"—that the aim of its authors was to secure for the settlers the greatest advantages on the best terms.⁵⁴

After the return of the bishops to the West some well-wishers began to entertain fears for the project because they detected the absence of "life" in it, but Mr. Hickey ⁵⁵ found several reasons for taking a decidedly optimistic view of the situation. So many had been misinformed and uninformed of the possibilities of the great West and the probability of success for the Irish in the rôle of American farmer, that it was no easy matter for even the most enthusiastic westerners to relieve them of their convictions regarding it. However, Bishops Spalding and Ireland had succeeded so far that they had even communicated some of their own enthusiasm for the West to their brethren of the East.

In the second place, this special work had been excluded from Irish Catholic enterprise and traditions for a quarter of a century because of the powerful word of a powerful leader, himself an Irish emigrant and a man whose great heart was warm with love for Ireland and Ireland's exiled children. When Archbishop Hughes registered his opposition to western colonization for the Irish of America small wonder that even in 1879 it was hard for many to recognize the wisdom of it. Especially was it difficult to convince the eastern bishops that to keep the Irish in the cities was a mistake. That was perhaps the most formidable task facing these stronghearted western bishops. It took courage to attempt it, but they knew that only bishops could accomplish it, if indeed it could be done at all. And yet without it the work would fail.

In this, too, they succeeded. The only eastern bishop who has gone on record as opposed to it is Bishop McQuaid of Rochester.

⁵⁴ Pilot, July 12, 1879.

⁵⁵ Catholic Review, June 29, 1879.

Whether his opposition was active or not is uncertain, because the Catholic periodicals make no mention of him in this connection, nor has any reference to his attitude been found in the preserved writings of Bishop Spalding. It is the Rochester prelate himself who, in one of his letters, asserts his unqualified opposition to the Chicago convention and its work.⁵⁶

Thirdly, the clergy must be won, for the Irish love and confide in their priests as have the people of no other nation. In 1880, Bishop Spalding wrote:

The priest is the leader of the Irish people. His ascendancy over them has been consecrated by centuries of heroic sacrifice and sacred memories. He has stood by them when all others deserted them. He kept alive in their hearts the knowledge of God and the love of virtue during the long years in which the whole aim of a strong and cruel government was to exterminate them or reduce them to the condition of the brute. They trust him, they venerate him, they love him. Their enemies took from them their lands, destroyed their churches and cloisters, reduced their chieftains to beggary, but the priest followed them into the bogs and the hovels, carrying on his lips and in his hands the hope and the love of higher things. . . . Now, in America, in the midst of surroundings the most undesirable, the Irish people retain their ancient faith and their ancient love of the priest, and I am persuaded that organized agitation in connection with a wise system of colonization, under the direction and with the active co-operation of the bishops and priests of the United States would lead to the accomplishment of a work which few now believe practicable, and which, in its salutary results, would surpass the dreams of its most enthusiastic supporters. . . .

Even if there were question whether it is wise or proper that bishops and priests should enter actively into such a movement, the doubt vanishes in the presence of the necessity. They must lead, or we must fold our arms and give up hope of rescuing our people from

the dangers which surround them.57

It was this unwillingness of the Irish in America to go beyond

⁵⁶ Zwierlein, F. Life and Letters of Bishop McQuaid, III., p. 140. ¹⁷ Religious Mission, pp. 149-51.

the reach of the ministrations of the priest that gave added value to that part of the plan adopted by the Irish Catholic Colonization Association that provided for the sending out of a priest with each colony. In fact, the intention was that the priest precede the people and so be ready to welcome them upon their arrival and help them thereafter in every way possible. But while overcoming the natural shrinking of city dwellers from taking the step that meant venturing into what was comparatively unknown, it was necessary also to break down the reluctance of their pastors to let them go. Although Bishop Spalding regretted this, he could nevertheless understand it:

At points where large numbers of Catholics have been gathered costly churches, and occasionally schools also, have been erected, and these structures are frequently still encumbered with debts. It is in accordance with psychological laws that, in such circumstances, the pastors should feel no great enthusiasm for a cause which might have the effect of lessening the revenues with which they are to meet their obligations. As the gas-jet by which we write seems as large as one of the fixed stars, so do our own little projects rise mountainhigh before our eyes and shut from view great and universal causes. It is not surprising then, that instances should be known in which the pastors deliberately set their faces against any attempt to persuade their people that the life of an operative in a factory mill is not as desirable as any other. And it is held that in so acting they are but following the example of one of the ablest and most enlightened prelates of the Church in America.⁵⁸

The bishops did succeed in winning the active sympathy of many of the eastern clergy. Indeed one of the most hopeful indications of success for the movement was the great interest displayed in it by some of the prominent clergymen of New York, Brooklyn, and New Jersey. Men like Father Donnelly, Father Malone, Father Larkin, Dr. McGlynn, Father Ducey, Father Kiely, and Father O'Hare, knew well the constantly reiterated story of descent from poverty to destitution in periods of distress and of the quick consumption of the poor savings of thrifty people at such times, and they were enthusi-

⁵⁸ Religious Mission, p. 145.

astic in the cause. What is better, they were ardent promoters of it and generous subscribers to it.⁵⁹

In his first annual report Mr. Onahan offers the sincere thanks of the Association for the aid and co-operation given by many of these priests. Especially does he express gratitude to the pastors and assistants of many of the churches of New York City, Brooklyn, Boston, Lowell, Canton (Massachusetts), and Philadelphia for the work they did in gathering in the subscriptions.⁶⁰

Finally it was necessary to secure the co-operation of capitalists. Herein the promoters failed, at least partially, although the *Catholic Review* is congratulatory on this point as on all the others. Of course, to have collected subscriptions to the amount of \$32,000 in one month was something, but when we consider what the sum could have been, and under such advocacy, should have been, we can appreciate the comment that accompanies Bishop Spalding's report of the tour of the East, as given in his book on Catholic colonization. He tells us that the Association began with the comparatively small sum of \$100,000: first, because at least in the minds of many the work would appear to be more or less of an experiment, and secondly, because he and his associates doubted their ability to raise a larger sum, and then he adds:

This doubt has been more than justified by the extraordinary efforts which it was found necessary to make in order to raise among the Catholics of the United States even one hundred thousand dollars for the purposes of colonization. The publication of the object and plan of the Association, together with a succinct but clear statement of the reasons which proved this to be a safe investment, had no effect whatever in calling forth active co-operation, although the leading Catholic newspapers took up the subject and urged its importance upon their readers. Nothing remained but to make personal appeals in the large cities of the country, and several bishops were deputed to do this work. It was thought that when the subject would be brought in all its fullness to the attention of the

⁵⁹ Catholic Review, June 14, 1879. ⁶⁰ Catholic Review, May 29, 1880.

wealthier and more intelligent Catholics, public spirit and sympathy, however feeble, with the masses of their countrymen would lead them to take interest enough in the matter to subscribe for at least a considerable part of the stock. Only here and there, however, was found one who seemed to take interest in the question or to comprehend the urgent need of helping on the movement. Stronger evidence could not be desired of the dearth of large and enlightened views among wealthy Catholics on the work and wants of the Church in the United States. Even the better sort seem to have little idea of anything that reaches beyond a parish charity. In order to raise the capital stock it was found necessary to hold mass meetings in various cities, so as to give the poor an opportunity of subscribing for single shares.⁶¹

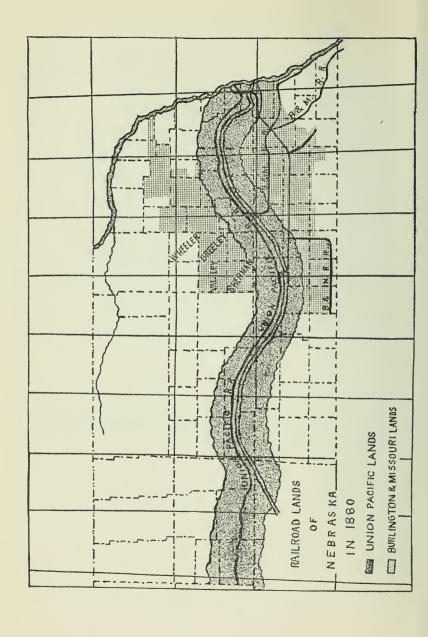
Without any further comment upon an experience that must have come perilously near to killing his buoyant faith in humanity, he concluded simply with the statement that the money had been called in and certificates issued to the subscribers.⁶²

That the movement failed to accomplish directly all that was hoped for it is attributable almost, if not entirely, to the holding back of men of wealth.⁶³

⁶¹ Religious Mission, pp. 194-96.

⁶² Religious Mission, p. 196.

⁶⁸ Bishop O'Connor went so far as to state that no more than \$10,000 was subscribed by men of means—that the rest of the \$83,000 that was finally paid in came from the comparatively poor, who could only take one, or at the most, two or three shares.—Report of interview to Dublin Freeman's Journal, June 14, 1885. Onahan Scrapbook.



Chapter III

The Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States

PLANTING THE COLONIES

(Sept. 1879-Sept. 1880)

The Executive Council of the Association inaugurated the actual work of colonization in the summer of 1879 by the purchase of colony land, and between then and September of the following year, while advancing the work of Catholic Colonization by means of lecturing, writing, and the gathering in of subscription funds, the Association succeeded in establishing two colonies—one in Nobles County, Minnesota, on 8000 acres secured from the Northern Pacific Railroad through Archbishop Ireland, and the other on 25,000 acres in Greeley County, Nebraska. Here application had first been made to the Union Pacific Railroad, but the company could not furnish the desired quantity in a single tract, so recourse was had to the Burlington and Missouri,2 which held unsold lands in Greelev County. There was a special advantage in securing this land because some seventy-five Irish people had settled there about two years before and made a success of pioneering, so it was considered that they might very well form the nucleus of the prospective colony. The Minnesota settlement was made in the summer of 1879; that of Nebraska not until the early months of 1880.

¹ Catholic Review, June 29, 1879. ² An Act of Congress of 1864 had donated to the Union Pacific Company every odd section on either side of the tracks to help finance the road. When the Burlington and Missouri Company was organized a similar concession was made to it. But the grants conflicted, so the B. & M. was given sections known as "lieu land" lying outside the twenty-mile limit.—Interview, March, 1929,

Mr. T. P. Lanigan.

In the meantime, confidence in the movement had been inspired among the people, chiefly because it was under the direction of such western bishops as the three who were most active, and was supported by such men of the East as Archbishops Williams and Gibbons, Cardinal McClosky of New York, and Bishop Ryan of Buffalo. Great enthusiasm characterized the meetings in New York, Boston, and Buffalo, and parochial movements in support of colonization were started by Father Donnelly of St. Michael's.³

Welcome endorsement came in July from an unexpected quarter: Horatio Seymour, ex-Governor of New York, in a letter of June 20 to a Hebrew gentleman, makes reference to a prospective Jewish colony, and adds this significant comment:

I have watched with interest the plans of the Catholic Church to get the Irish to go into the country and to make their homes upon farms. I deem it a wise policy. Some fault has been found with it and it has been said that it is not well to have sectarian colonies. I see no force in this. Our government is not opposed to sects, for it protects all creeds. It is wise to have those of different faith so placed at the outset that they can keep up their respective places of worship. If they are too intermingled none of them can do this. No evil can grow out of this plan, for intercourse among men of all nationalities, creeds, and political opinion is so free in this Union that there is no danger that any class will become too bigoted or intolerant. The Irish will certainly gain by going into the country. They are used to farm work and as a rule those who till the soil do better than those who live in towns and cities. They are buying up lands now in all parts of this state and in the West, and this fact leads to an improvement in all ways and gives them growing power and influence 4

Early in the summer of 1879 Archbishop Ireland and Mr. O'Brien planned an excursion to Minnesota for those who were interested in the new Association, and sent invitations to many. By the middle of July all the preparations for "making much" of the

³ Catholic Review, July 26, 1879. ⁴ Catholic Review, July 16, 1879.

party were completed and Mr. O'Brien had even rounded out his plans to the extent of having arranged to board the visitors' train at Winona and ride with them on to St. Paul. He had also written to Charles A. Dana of the New York Sun and asked him to send on a representative of his paper.⁵ And then came the letters of regret pouring in. Mr. P. V. Hickey wrote to Mr. Onahan in July to tell him of his lack of success in trying to induce men to go. The temperature, he said, was ninety-nine degrees in the shade and chiefly for that reason his friends feared to undertake the hardship of the trip. He said he believed that if the invitation were repeated in the cool weather they would go.

"I am sorry for the Bishop," he concluded. "It seems like the parable of the great feast—everyone having an excuse." 6

Many individuals wrote explaining their inability to avail themselves at that time of the invitation, of although all arrangements had been made for receiving the expected guests, the excursion was postponed. However, a party of clergy, accompanied by some Boston gentlemen and a few railroad officials, did go up,8 and that was a distinct gain for the cause. There had been so many land and railroad swindles that it was necessary to take active measures to inspire confidence in prospective colonizers and investors. In fact, one of the advantages of having bishops in the lead in this phase of the colonization movement lay in their power to break down the prejudice that dishonest dealings had built up. Further to increase confidence the bishops wished Easterners to come and observe conditions for themselves

The first quarterly meeting of the Colonization Association was held in the Grand Pacific Hotel, Chicago, with Bishop Spalding presiding.9 Reports were made by Archbishop Ireland and Bishop

⁶ O'Brien, Letter to W. J. Onahan, July, 1879, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁶ Hickey, Letter to W. J. Onahan, July 15, 1879, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁷ Letters to W. J. Onahan, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁸ Catholic Review, August 2, 1879.

⁹ Irish-American, September 7, 1880.

O'Connor of the sites selected by them for colonization purposes in Minnesota and Nebraska, and plans were made for opening colonies there in the coming spring. Reports of the bishops' tour of the East were also received. Many of the shares were still to be placed, so it was decided that General Lawler canvass Milwaukee and the Northwest, and that Bishops Spalding and Ireland return to the East with Bishop O'Connor in November to finish the work there.¹⁰ It was arranged that Bishop Spalding go to New York State, Bishop O'Connor to Pennsylvania, Archbishop Ireland to New England and he and Bishop Spalding to Washington and Baltimore.11

The report showed that the subscriptions thus far secured were, for the most part, from New York, Boston, St. Paul, and Chicago, with some from Baltimore and Buffalo that were not yet officially recorded. The Secretary reported an unending stream of applications and inquiries, and from all quarters, especially the press, came words of commendation and expressions of sympathy. Mr. Onahan declared that it meant the redemption of a race, that it signified the social and moral elevation of a people, but that to be a success it must be given co-operation. At that time the prospective resources (\$100,-000) admitted of the establishment of only two colonies. With more capital wider extension could be given the movement, but he reiterated what the bishops had said repeatedly: that they did not aim at a monopoly of the work. They were eager that their undertaking be a success because it was meeting a great need, because its success would serve as a stimulus to the formation of similar societies throughout the country, and because failure would be disastrous to all future efforts in the cause of Catholic colonization. He ended his report with a strong plea for earnest and generous co-operation.12

Before the adjournment of the meeting the secretary was instructed to address a communication to the Irish-American Catholic press, giving a statement of the condition of the Association and an

 ¹⁰ Catholic Review, September 13, 1879.
 ¹¹ Northwestern Chronicle, September 13, 1879.
 ¹² Northwestern Chronicle, September 20, 1879.

outline of the plans and rules laid down for the conduct of its affairs.¹³ Accompanying this address, issued September 6, went the secretary's warm appeal to Catholics whom God had prospered to come to the aid of those less favored in that regard, and the final oft-repeated assurance that the work, though charitable, entailed no loss and no risk of loss to the investor.14 Finally he urged that those with subscription lists make prompt return and that those who were considering subscribing, do so at once.15

The editor of the Catholic Review, in publishing this address, added his word of encouragement, declaring that he was so confident that moneys entrusted to Bishop Spalding and his co-laborers were safe that he had subscribed a far larger sum 16 than he could have offered safely to a pure charity. "Yet as a charity we count few dearer than this, which provides homes and futures for the poor and Catholic Irish of America. If our word," he concluded, "has any weight with the readers of these lines, we pray them to aid their bishops in this great work." 17

We noticed earlier that an attitude unfriendly to the Association's work had been assumed by several papers. After the September meeting a new kind of opposition was to be reckoned with: the spirit of sectionalism that recognizes nothing of good beyond its borders, the parochialism that would gather in and hold for itself alone all benefits and advantages, the deadening spirit against which Bishop Spalding had protested with such vigor and eloquence in his lectures of the early summer.

Evidence of this appeared in the Kansas City Catholic Tribune almost immediately after the publication of the September Address. although the Secretary had included in that a warning against just such an attitude. The Tribune advanced the hope that the Irish

¹³ Irish-American, September 27, 1879. ¹⁴ Catholic Review, September 20, 1879. ¹⁵ Irish-American, September 27, 1879. ¹⁶ He is listed for \$500.

¹⁷ Catholic Review, September 20, 1879.

Catholic Colonization Association would consider the prosperous condition of the Irish colonies of Missouri and "not undertake to settle upon the wilderness of waste lands in the northern tier of States, where dreary winter holds high carnival eight months of the year." The *Northwestern Chronicle* had been the staunch champion of the movement from the beginning, and now it courteously but vigorously challenged the motive of such "misrepresentation":

Catholic colonization is the question of the day and it is an encouraging sign that various sections of the country are interested in it. But it is a sad comment upon human nature that even in presence of such a momentous question prejudice and local interests cannot be forgotten. What matter is it to the man in deep love with his Church and his race whether the immigrants find a home in one State or another, provided they do find a home. Quarreling and bickering about this or that place show that our motives are not the purest and that something beside the weal of the immigrant is intended.¹⁸

The editor included in his denunciation a Kansas clergyman who, in a New York lecture, took for his main argument in favor of his state what he imagined and perhaps believed were the adverse climatic conditions of Minnesota. The *Chronicle* concludes:

We write now as giving a caution to our friends in the work of colonization for the future, rather than as making a reproach for the past. The representatives of Kansas and Western Missouri are the only ones so far, fortunately, who have sinned in this regard.¹⁹

Only a few weeks passed, however, before the doughty editor of St. Paul was in the field again. This time his antagonist was a certain J. Vincent O'Connor whom Patrick Donahoe had allowed to introduce into his Magazine an article that decried Catholic colonization in general and Minnesota Catholic colonization in particular. The *Chronicle* called upon Mr. Donahoe, whose name had been a

¹⁸ Northwestern Chronicle, October 4, 1879. ¹⁹ Ibid

household word for years in every Irish-American home and whose influence for good had been great, to disclaim any responsibility for so injurious an article and to contradict the false statements he had allowed to be printed. He resented, and rightly, the attack made upon Catholic colonization by J. Vincent, who represented it as an attempt to take the Irish from their proper place in the city battling for right and law and faith, and condemn them to a life of drudgery and isolation in the West which he pictures as an uninhabited wilderness with no climate, only "storms and bugs and strange perturbations of nature." ²⁰

One well-meaning Catholic banker predicted failure for the Association because he believed it was impossible to hold Irishmen together in a colony or anywhere else.²¹

In the meantime the bishops designated for the work were preparing for the winter campaign. It was intended that they go East in October, but Bishops Spalding and Ireland were detained in their dioceses until November, 22 so Bishop O'Connor preceded them to the East. We have an undated letter written by him from Atlantic City, N. J., to Mr. Onahan, stating that he would be in Philadelphia the following week, but that he was not particularly hopeful of success in obtaining subscriptions. However, he did succeed in arousing great interest and in securing the promise of substantial help.23 The point Bishop O'Connor stressed particularly was that the Irish Catholic Colonization Association was intended not to stimulate but to direct Catholic migration to the West,24 whereas Bishop Spalding and Archbishop Ireland rather emphasized both the need of inducing Irish Catholics to leave the large cities and the advantage of western migration. All three tried to impress upon their hearers the absolute

²⁰ Northwestern Chronicle, November 22, 1879.

²¹ Bishop O'Connor, undated letter to W. J. Onahan, October, 1879, Onahan Scrapbook.

²² Catholic Review, November 22, 1879.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Catholic Review, November 1, 1879.

necessity of financial co-operation with the designs of the Association if it was to be enabled to give the assistance required to effect this migration.

About the third week in November the three bishops met in New York. Then Bishop O'Connor returned to Nebraska and the other two, "more enthusiastic than ever" and much encouraged by commendation from all sources, even the London *Times*, threw themselves into the work of making it possible to secure for the Irish-American Catholics at least some portion of the West. To this they were giving time, labor, and money that they could ill spare from other works more directly concerning themselves.

A characteristic letter written at this time to the Omaha bishop by Archbishop Ireland gives us some idea of the response evoked by him and Bishop Spalding in New York and Brooklyn. In it he writes: "You will be pleased to know that the shares are going off like hot cakes. Bishop Spalding is working well. He describes in glowing terms to the people the tall grasses and fertile fields of Greeley County." ²⁵

The two seem to have agreed to work together in New York and New England as well as in Baltimore and Washington because the report of nearly every meeting shows that each in turn took the platform. They began with a flying but most successful trip to Brooklyn. Bishop Loughlin not only gave them all the facilities needed, together with his hearty good wishes, but he also explained to the Catholics of his diocese the object of the work. The pastors of four centrally located Brooklyn churches, St. Mary Star of the Sea, St. Peter's, St. Patrick's, and Sts. Peter and Paul likewise invited them to address their congregations. Each appearance of the prelates found these churches densely crowded,²⁶ the message they brought was enthusiastically received by the audiences, and their

²⁵ Omaha Diocesan Archives, Letter to Bishop O'Connor, November 19, 1879.
²⁶ Irish-American, November 29, 1879; Catholic Review, November 29, 1879.

work highly extolled by the secular as well as the religious press. The *Brooklyn Eagle* especially wondered why "a scheme of benevolence so admirably calculated to develop self-respect and lead to independence was not sooner thought of." ²⁷ This paper called the purposes and methods of the Society simple and reasonable and predicted success for it because of the confidence which the leaders had inspired in men of wealth and because the managers would not be enriched by any part of the settlers' earnings.

Vast numbers in these Brooklyn churches were instructed in the means and ends of the Association. Especially did Bishop Spalding preach the advantage of colonization to the home and the family. Although the least successful method of raising subscriptions, the appeal to crowds, was employed, Brooklyn raised its previous contribution to \$17,000.28 When the bishops left for Boston after a week's work in Brooklyn they were able to report that the amount subscribed had been raised to \$70,000, but the greatest work accomplished had been the instruction given the masses on the advantages of western colonization.29 Even though men who could have promoted the work, who could have made it possible for the Association to buy up and hold for settlement great tracts of cheap fertile land, withheld their co-operation, the secretary's reports show that people who needed assistance responded in such numbers that if only there had been enough money at the disposal of the society its benevolence could have been extended to thousands.

The first meeting in Boston, November 30, was held in the basement of Holy Cross Cathedral. The rector, the vicar-general, and four other priests were in attendance.³⁰ As in his Brooklyn lectures, Bishop Spalding gave the reason for addressing the people on Catholic colonization in the church, and for the participation of bishops in

²⁷ Catholic Review, November 29, 1879.

²⁹ Omaha Diocesan Archives, Letter to Bishop O'Connor, November 19, 1879.
³⁰ Pilot. December 6, 1879.

the work. He declared that the movement, besides being of vital moment to the temporal welfare of Catholic people, was "intimately connected with the progress and permanency of Catholicity in this country." Catholic colonization in the United States had been begun in 1632 with Lord Baltimore and Father White, had advanced into Kentucky, Illinois, and Kansas, and, because of conditions that had grown up in American cities, it was in that day (1879) of supreme importance to Irish-American Catholics. He concluded by exclaiming that he wished they had a man like Daniel O'Connell or Father Mathew to lead them into the West.³¹ Archbishop Ireland followed with an account of his Minnesota colonies and the recital of the practical details of western migration—the amount of money needed, etc.

Although the theme and the points emphasized were essentially the same in all the addresses given at this time by Bishop Spalding, they present an amazing variety of treatment. His breadth of view and of sympathy, his learning and his eloquence breathed life and warmth into his every utterance and moved his hearers to enthusiastic response.³² No less remarkable than this was the energy displayed by him and Bishop Ireland. Day after day they appeared in the various churches of the Boston, Providence, and Hartford dioceses, tirelessly and with unabated enthusiasm presenting their arguments and making their appeals. Newspaper report had it, too, that they brought back "handsome subscriptions" with them when they returned to New York about the middle of December.33 By order of the Cardinal Archbishop notice of their arrival was sent to all the churches of New York and thanks to this and to the co-operation of the pastors, the bishops were enabled to preach Catholic colonization in many of the churches. The Northwestern Chronicle has given us the program of one week's work. On Sunday of the third week of

³¹ Ibid.

³² Reports: Catholic Review, Boston Pilot, Irish-American, Ave Maria, Catholic Standard, Northwestern Chronicle, and secular papers.
33 Northwestern Chronicle, December 27, 1879.

December they appeared at St. Stephens', on Monday at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, on Tuesday at St. Michael's, on Wednesday, at the instance of Bishop Corrigan of Newark, at St. Mary's Church, Jersey City, and on Thursday Bishop Spalding in the Jesuit Church in Jersey City and Bishop Ireland in the Church of Our Lady of Grace, Hoboken. On Friday they returned to the West and on December 22 the Board of Directors of the Colonization Association met in Chicago to receive their report.³⁴

The following is the comment of the Secretary at his presentation of the annual report in May, 1880:

It might be supposed that little effort would have been required on their part to secure the prompt sale of stock. Not so. Although the greatest interest and sympathy was shown by people generally, the class which could best afford to take stock was the slowest to subscribe. . . . Finally, as the result of protracted efforts at public meetings and in private assemblies, after two journeys to the East, the bishops at length were enabled to report the capital stock as fully subscribed.³⁵

Thereupon, it was decided that the subscriptions be called in at once, and that the land for colonists that had been purchased in Greeley County, Nebraska, be opened to emigrants on February 10. Contracts were made in January, 1880, for the shipping of houses: church, home for emigrants, and houses for settlers. Town sites were selected and named O'Connor and Spalding. The colony of Adrian in Nobles County, Minnesota, was reported a success. Thirty acres had been broken on each farm in June, 1879, and nearly three-fourths of the land had already been sold to parties, chiefly from Boston and vicinity.³⁶

At the same December meeting the project of a paper to be published in the interests of colonization was proposed by Father

 ³⁴ Northwestern Chronicle, December 27, 1879.
 ³⁵ Catholic Review, May 29, 1880. (Secretary's Report of meeting of May 5.)
 ³⁶ Northwestern Chronicle, January 24, 1880.

Byrne of Newark, New Jersey, and the subject referred to him and three bishops. The outcome was a handbook on Catholic emigration to the West by Father Byrne, addressed to the western clergy.³⁷

In accordance with the decision arrived at by the Board a call for the payment of subscriptions was sent out by the Secretary with instructions that these be paid to any of the directors of the Association or to the priest in whose parish the subscribers lived, or directly to the Secretary.38

The returns came in slowly and some did not materialize at all. Another call was sent out in April and the need of prompt response was urged. The principal reason assigned for this insistence was that the directors were anxious to close the subscription books and complete the issue of the full amount of the stock before the date fixed for the annual meeting of the shareholders, May 5, so as to be able to give them a full and exact statement of the affairs of the Association.39 However, when May 5 arrived the secretary was obliged to report a considerable falling-off in the returns. It was unfortunate that so much time had elapsed between the taking of many of the subscriptions and the call for cash payments. The shrinkage that inevitably resulted was accounted for in various ways. Many alleged altered circumstances.

". . . but by far the greater number," wrote the secretary, "especially of the subscribers of single shares, urged the drain on their limited resources, caused by the need to assist the starving poor in Ireland. This was a plea of which I hastened to acknowledge the justice and priority. It is plain that the unhappy condition of affairs in Ireland and the absorbing public efforts that were made here to aid the suffering people of the country effected to divert for a time the co-operation and assistance which otherwise would have been promptly accorded to this undertaking. Though our work may have

²⁷ Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Dakota, Viewed as Homes for the Poor of All Nations and Especially for the Laboring Classes; Boston Pilot, January 25, 1880.

28 Catholic Review, April 10, 1880.

been retarded by the operation of these causes I am satisfied the members of this Board will not deplore or lament any diversion of resources which was turned to the aid of the famine-sufferers of Ireland. Many of them I know have given large and substantial tokens of their sympathy in the same cause, and others have aided by memorable public efforts the charitable work of duty and humanity." ⁴⁰

In order to show on what a sound financial basis the Association stood at the close of its first year of existence we have copied from the Secretary's report the statement of moneys invested:

Paid for 25,303.55 acres of land in Greeley Co., Neb., at a				
	cost of\$34,812.04			
	(Purchased from the B. & M. R. R. of Neb. for			
	which the Association holds a full and absolute deed.)			
P	Paid John M. Ayer, Chicago, for church for Greeley Co.			
	Col., 40 x 80			
C	Cost of Emigrant House for same Colony			
Č	Cost of house for pastor of Colony			
F	reight on foregoing (and other expenses) 899.60			
	ents for the Colony			
-	75.00			
	Total outlay for acct. of Greeley Co., Neb\$38,027.20			
	10tal outlay for acct. of officiery co., 11cb			
	Adrian Colony			
1	Paid Sioux City and St. Paul R. R. Co. for 2,678 acres of			
	land in Adrian Township, Nobles Co., Minn., in full			
	(deed held by the Association)\$13,483.72			
Due to the same Company for 4,308 acres in same Town-				
	ship and Co 15,681.22			
F	Paid on account (29 houses for colonists)			
I	Dues for houses (since paid)			
	Cost of breaking 3,084.00			
_				

40 Catholic Review, May 29, 1880.

Bishop Spalding sent \$500 to the Archbishop of Tuam and \$500 to the Bishop of Kerry for the relief of the starving people of Ireland.—Catholic Review, February 28, 1880.

The total amount paid in to the Association at that time (May, 1880) was \$65,000; the total number of subscribers was 294 out of the original 500.

General Expense

General Expense		
Paid for expenses of organization including stationery,		
printing, and postage	445.15	
Paid for exchange of drafts received for subscriptions	43.66	
-	579,106.21	
Assets		
The assets of the Association are the Colony lands in Greeley Co., Neb., which, according to the schedule of prices fixed by the Railroad for the sale of its lands, adopted by the Association, will aggregate		
sold to colonists	3,215.16	

The land in the Adrian Col., Minn., now all sold and in

Add. cost of houses erected for colonists, which is added to

Cost of breaking as above, repaid in like manner.....

3,084.00

It is not necessary to add the detailed statements of the lands sold up to date in the colonies in order to prove that the investment was perfectly safe. In fact, there is little better security than certificates of stock based on land in a new and growing colony. It is hard for us today to understand how Catholics of wealth could have hesitated to take advantage of the offer of the Association, but hesitate they did. Some new subscribers were found, but not more than \$83,000 was ever paid into the society and consequently the number who actually went onto the colony lands was small. It is true that hundreds, even thousands of applications for information and assistance reached the Secretary during the first year, but the society was in a position to help only those who were able to help themselves. A man with three hundred dollars could, with the Association's assistance, get along in

⁴¹ Report, Onahan Scrapbook.

the West as well as could one with \$600 to \$1000 without it, but only too many of those who wrote appealing letters to Mr. Onahan had been unable to save anything at all. An occasional one among such people might have succeeded—it had happened that a man with no resources had become prosperous—but generally speaking, one could not encourage destitute families to risk failure. The amount contributed by shareholders, and that with the surest guarantee of return with interest, was strikingly disproportionate to the amount of time, energy, money, and even uncompensated service of the few, and in particular, the Secretary and those western bishops whose campaign in the East should have assured to the society not one hundred thousand but hundreds of thousands of dollars. 42

After the January meeting of 1880 Bishop Spalding returned to his diocesan work, but a letter from him to Bishop O'Connor on March 15 indicates that his mind was still on the work of the Association. After expressing hope that the colony was prospering he told the Bishop that he was looking forward with pleasure to a visit to Nebraska in May, though he feared some duty might intervene to prevent it.⁴³ Whether or not he was able to go is uncertain. It is probable that he deferred his trip to September, and, accompanied by Bishop O'Connor, went to the colonies with Bishop Ryan and Father Nugent.⁴⁴

In the early months of 1880 Bishop Spalding also found time to finish and publish his *Religious Mission of the Irish People and Catholic Colonization*. Apart from the fact that this book contains a clear statement of the condition of the Irish in American cities, of

⁴² The only member of the Association who received compensation for his services was the Secretary. He also served in the capacity of business agent to the company so it was necessary that he receive a salary.

⁴³ Omaha Diocesan Archives, Letter to Bishop O'Connor, March 15, 1880.

[&]quot;Only one of the pioneers interviewed remembers the presence of Bishop Spalding in Nebraska. This lady tells us that about 1880 while she was a little girl, three bishops, Bishop O'Connor, Bishop Spalding, and Bishop Ryan, visited O'Connor and addressed the people there.—Interview, March, 1929, Mrs. Dewhurst of Greeley, Nebraska.

the great need of a remedy for the condition, and of the means that were then being employed by the Irish Catholic Colonization Association to meet this need, it also gives a brief history of Irish Catholic colonization efforts in this country, and concludes with two essays on past and present (1880) relations of Ireland with England and the impressions left with him from a brief sojourn "amid Irish scenes."

The book seems to be one of Bishop Spalding's least known works, but it breathes a freshness and a vigor, an enthusiasm for what is right and a denunciation of what is wrong that make it delightful reading. It furnishes evidence that already the author had acquired a literary style whose very simplicity and directness made it singularly eloquent, while it shows that he was the possessor of a mind well stored with historical data, gifted with a sense of historical values, and keenly alive to the sociological and economic problems of the day. Moreover, it discloses a heart that could swell with indignation at injustice done, pay tribute to faith that would not die, yet weep for the woes of men and women, and especially little children. The work was given wide and well-deserved publicity in literary journals and newspapers, and it undoubtedly gave a powerful impulse to the work of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association.

When St. Patrick's Day of that year came round the citizens of Peoria celebrated the occasion by printing in green *The Irish Record*. Various prominent writers were invited to contribute to the number. Bishop Spalding's article was on Catholic colonization. He wrote of the Irish in the cities of the United States: factory slaves, the victims of poverty and misery; and of the Irish of Ireland: tenants at will, victims likewise of poverty and misery. In neither case had the people a home and what they needed most, insisted the Bishop, was the opportunity to secure one. This the Irish Catholic Colonization Association was aiming to provide. He told his readers that the organization held out prosperity to the thrifty, that it would insure

influences which would promote health and virtue, that it would rescue the poor from the vices and temptations of factory towns and cities, that it would emancipate them from the ward caucus and the saloon, and that the means whereby this would be accomplished was Catholic colonization in our western States. He finished by outlining the plans and prospects of the Association.⁴⁵

As previously stated, the colony lands of Nebraska were opened to settlement in February, and a few days later Mr. P. H. Barry started West with a party of twenty-four families from Boston. 46 Although they went under the auspices of the Boston Catholic Colonization Society of which Mr. Barry was president, they settled first near the O'Connor colony in what is still known as Boston Valley. Other families from New England and groups from Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, and New York followed. 47 By the time the Association met in early May 150 families had migrated to the colony lands of Greeley County, 48 and all the land of the Minnesota colony except two quarter sections had been sold and occupied. The special reports of the colonists indicated that all were satisfied and doing well.

Mr. Onahan had endeavored to secure from the railroad reduced rates for colonists but because of a "pool" arrangement general concessions beyond the existing low rates could not be obtained. However, the railway managers showed themselves exceedingly liberal in individual cases. This was especially true of the Chicago Northwestern, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, the Illinois Central, and the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis roads.⁴⁹

On May 5, 1880, at the first annual meeting of the Board of Directors and shareholders of the Association all the old directors

^{45 &}quot;Catholic Colonization," Catholic Review, April 10, 1880.

^{**} Pilot, May 22, 1880, March 4, 1880 (Letter of M. T. Donahoe to W. J. Onahan).

⁴⁷ Pilot, May 22, 1880.

⁴⁸ Catholic Review, May 29, 1880 (Report of Rev. J. M. J. Smythe, pastor of Greeley County Colony).

⁴⁹ Catholic Review, May 29, 1880 (Secretary's Report).

were re-elected and the former officers unanimously reinstated for another year.⁵⁰ The Secretary gave a detailed and scholarly report of the work accomplished by the organization during the previous year, and made some recommendations, chiefly on the subject of aid for the Irish immigrant.

The Association had been formed with the avowed intention of devoting itself entirely to the interests of Irish Catholics of American cities. However, owing to the Land League agitation and the famine condition in Ireland the unhappy inhabitants of that ill-fated land were crowding our shores and their situation upon arrival demanded attention. In fact, in the first months of 1880 there was an extraordinary movement into the country from almost all parts of Europe. In 1872 immigration had totaled 437,750; in 1873 it was 422,545 and then it had declined rapidly until in 1877 it was only 130,503. In 1878 it rose to 153,207; in 1879 it was 250,565, and 1880 saw the greatest number that had ever come to America in one year. That year there were 503,045, and the following year, 720,045.51 The Commissioners of Emigration predicted in May that the influx of foreigners into New York that year would be greater than ever before. More than 80,000 had arrived since January 1, and basing their estimate on that, they calculated that the total for the year would be not less than 400,000.

It is to be noted that our colonizers were not urging immigration. That great numbers were leaving Ireland was simply recognized as a fact and seemingly one over which no one had any control, but which must be met. They hoped that the old tragedy of Irish immigrants settling along the seaboard and supplying the cheap labor that enriched the few and brought destitution to the multitude would not

⁵⁰ Northwestern Chronicle, May 15, 1880. These officers were re-elected as long as the Association lasted.

⁵¹ Report of the U. S. Bureau of Statistics, Washington, D. C. (Treasury Department) to Hon. Jas. J. Folger, Secretary of the Treasury, Feb. 14, 1882. Onahan Scrapbook.

Of those that came in 1880, 332,495 landed in New York, and in 1881, 461.131 landed there.

be re-enacted. The factory system seemed at that time a necessary evil, but we wonder, with Bishop Spalding, why most of the places there, and in the mines and other industries where men and women worked hard and received little, were held by the Irish. "Why not," he exclaimed, "let the Germans, the English, or the Americans sacrifice themselves for this grim Moloch of Mammon?"

Interest in the question of caring for immigrants was augmented by the fact that in this same report Mr. Onahan told of the intention of Father Nugent of Liverpool to send one hundred Irish families from Connemara to America, provided they be taken care of upon their arrival: either forwarded to some of the Catholic colonies or given such work as would assure to them a livelihood. This was a species of assisted emigration, and the Irish Catholic Colonization Association held aloof from anything of that nature. However, Archbishop Ireland offered in the name of the Catholic Colonization Society of St. Paul to assume responsibility for fifty of these families. It seemed certain that arrangements would be made elsewhere for the reception and maintenance of the others.⁵²

The Secretary added to this section of his report an earnest plea for some organized effort to meet the need of immigrants. He suggested that a national Emigrant Aid Society be formed with offices in each of the chief cities of the United States. This society he thought might serve as a Bureau of Information both for the immigrant and the American colonist. This trustworthy information and advice would be of inestimable value to those seeking it, and, in most cases, would be more indispensable than money. To be sure, he as well as the others, appreciated the fact that in certain instances pecuniary aid also must be given. However, he believed that if the Association were enabled to take care of the work mapped out for it, the proposed Bureaus could co-operate with it best by restricting their activities almost entirely to the furnishing of advice and direction. By the establishment of such centres the scope of the

⁵² The story of the "Connemaras" will be found in Chapter V.

Irish Catholic Colonization Association and like societies could be enlarged without their being made unwieldy. These auxiliary societies would make it possible to reach and aid a greater number and to do this more expeditiously and effectively than could the national association. Moreover, there would always be the advantage of their being co-ordinated with a central organization. The subsequent establishment of the Immigrant Mission at Castle Garden, New York, under the auspices of the Association, was the direct outcome of the interest aroused at this time and so ably fostered by Mr. Onahan and his associates in the work of colonization.

Chapter IV

The Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT AND DISSOLUTION

(1880-1891)

When the Board of Directors met in September, 1880, the condition of the Nebraska and Minnesota colonies was so promising that the Association could direct its attention to other fields. Archbishop Ireland submitted a proposition from the Northern Pacific Railway Company offering lands in Dakota for two colonies of 50,000 acres each, one east and one west of Bismarck, to be under the control of the Association for five years. The proposal included an offer from the railroad to transport free from St. Paul to the colonies persons intending to settle on this land under the auspices of the Association, with their household effects and necessary farm implements. Bishop Marty explained the character of the country under consideration, and the board, after a conversational discussion of the matter, appointed a committee, consisting of Bishop Marty, General Lawler, and Anthony Kelly, to examine the land and report their findings to the president.

Bishop O'Connor reported that the Greeley colonies were doing well, and said further that the location of a Swiss Catholic colony in Nebraska was being contemplated, and that there was much good available land near the O'Neill settlement in Holt County.¹ It was made evident that the Swiss Colony and the Irish Settlements projected by John Sweetman and Father Nugent were inspired by the

¹ See map, p. 130.

success of Archbishop Ireland's Minnesota colonies and the work of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association.

In connection with this matter Bishop Ryan submitted a resolution

that as a national Catholic Association this Board heartily endorses the movements entertained and partially carried out by the Catholic capitalists to purchase western lands now in the market with the view to encourage Catholic colonization as contemplated by the Association; and that we urge and encourage such movements and will give our general approval to them when satisfied that a due regard has been shown and just provision made for the religious needs of the colonists; and that the land, climate, and conditions are such as to justify our approval under all necessary qualifications and safeguards.

The resolution was adopted.

Father O'Kelly of the diocese of Peoria was appointed the agent of the Association in New York with authority to collect unpaid subscriptions to the capital stock and to represent the Association generally in the East for a limited period.²

Although it was with satisfaction that the Board learned from the treasurer's report that there was a balance of \$3,124.83 in the treasury, it was with some chagrin that they found there there was still a considerable amount lacking to the \$100,000 authorized by law. This time Bishops Spalding, Ireland and Ryan were designated a committee to raise the necessary amount to fill up the required sum. The effort to accomplish this was to be made first in Chicago during the month of November and later in the cities of the East and West, if necessary.

Father O'Kelly proceeded at once to New York and each Sunday for several weeks lectured in the various churches of the city and during the week spent his time chiefly in interviewing persons who were interested in the colonies.³ Bishop Spalding and Bishop Ireland

² Catholic Review, October 10, 1880 (Report of the Secretary of the Association).

³ Catholic Review, December 11, 1880.

resumed the task of trying to impress Catholics, this time of Chicago and Detroit, with the greatness of the work and the necessity of their co-operation with it.

As during their tour of the East a year before, so now they found their audiences enthusiastic and their every meeting apparently a success. Subscriptions were taken and Catholic and secular papers applauded their efforts,⁴ and yet in the course of his lectures at St. Ignatius Hall Bishop Spalding was impelled to declare, after picturing again as he had done so often before, the direful need of lifting the Irish poor out of the cities, that he considered it a "burning shame that with the knowledge of this state of affairs it should require all the exertion of the Catholic bishops, priests, and influential laymen who had given their aid in the work, to raise the comparatively insignificant sum of \$100,000 as capital for a stock company to buy land for Irish colonization." ⁵

In April and again in May of 1881 Father Stephen Byrne, through the columns of the *Catholic Review*, urged co-operation with the Irish Catholic Colonization Association. He insisted that the present time (1881) offered to the industrious poor greater opportunities than had any previous time, and that the Catholic Colonization

⁴ The Chicago Tribune, after reporting a joint lecture of the bishops in Chicago makes these concluding comments on the need of the work they were doing:

[&]quot;The problem before the good bishops, therefore, is to find means to supply these hard working toilers with money and with inducements to take up land and go to farming. One of the greatest works the Roman Catholic Church in this country can do is to enlist all its power and influence over its laity to get them away from the cities and towns, and to induce them to go upon land, where they can make a good living, and grow up to be honest, sober, and respectable men. There is no better class of farmers in the world, but how a farmer is to buy a farm without money is a problem that will tax any one's ingenuity to solve. The Germans, Norwegians, and Swedes, or the large number of them, go to farming because they bring enough money with them to purchase farms; but how many of them would be any better off than the Irish if they had been similarly robbed and pauperized?"

Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁵ The *Chicago Times*, in reporting this speech, added, "The vast audience heartily cheered Bishop Spalding at the close of his remark."—*Chicago Review*, December 25, 1880, (quoting *Chicago Times*).

tion Association in particular held out to them inestimable benefits; that it would enable them to become independent possessors of the soil and that it would build up communities in the West that would be the glory of the Church and the pride of the Nation. He declared that the Association had more than realized its hopes—that it had established colonies of its own, had helped to fill up other colonies, had set vast numbers of persons to thinking of the opportunities offered by the West, and had instructed a large number of intending immigrants in the British Islands as to their proper destination in this country.⁶

At about the same time Mr. Onahan wrote for the American Catholic Quarterly Review an article entitled the "Catholic Movement in Western Colonization," in which he gave a brief sketch of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association and an exposition of the part contributed to it by bishops and priests. Then he solemnly declared that what was still to be done rested with Catholic laymen of wealth in the United States whose "plain duty" he considered it "either to combine with the existing association in extending and enlarging the scope of its operations, aiding it with the necessary increase of capital as an investment, or by forming new combinations under kindred auspices and conditions for a like end and purpose."

Although only \$80,000 had been paid into the capital stock the Directors at the meeting in May were able to declare a 6% dividend and to report that the colonies were doing well and that many immigrants from England and Ireland as well as people from Boston had settled in them.⁸ There seemed to be general satisfaction with the Association. Its methods were plain, its design laudable, its organization legal, its plans practical and business-like. The lands in Nebraska and Minnesota had been fully paid for and the titles vested

⁶ Catholic Review, April 2, 1881; May 14, 1881.

[&]quot;"Catholic Movement in Western Colonization," American Catholic Quarterly Review, VI (1881) p. 444.

⁸ Catholic Review, May 21, 1881.

in the Association. The settlers were meeting their obligations satisfactorily.

Again, in this report, we find Mr. Onahan appealing for assistance for the Irish immigrant. The portion of his report that refers to this is well worth quoting verbatim, especially because it is so perfect an expression of the aims of the Association.⁹

Before the summer of 1881 the Nebraska and the Minnesota colonies were an assured success and therefore the directors could consider the extention of their interest to other western states. The intention from the beginning had been that the Society be national in the true sense of the word. Not only were all the Catholics of the United States invited to co-operate with it but the intention was that all climates and conditions be provided for settlers. Therefore now in the spring of 1881 the directors turned their attention to the Southwest. Indeed, in December of 1880 proposals looking to the

⁹ "The importance of putting before the public the necessary information for the guidance of the emigrant and colonist cannot be overestimated. The emigrant from Ireland especially stands in need of this light and aid to direct him aright in determining where and under what conditions he shall select his future home. This Association was not founded for the purpose of encouraging immigration from Ireland. It was rather to improve the condition and prospects of the Irish people already settled in the principal cities and manufacturing towns of the United States, and to move, or make it possible to move, a moiety of them to the land in Catholic colonies and neighborhoods. But the great flood of emigration from Ireland cannot be ignored, and it would be criminal to neglect it. However much we may deplore the existence of the causes that have occasioned this new exodus, the fact remains and confronts us. While so much patriotic zeal and oratory and money is employed and expended in the cause of multiplied Irish National and Benevolent organizations, it does seem as if the attention and efforts of the friends of the race might be rationally directed towards aiding and befriending the Irish immigrant on his arrival in America. Surely the Irish peasant farmer, when he lands in America, perhaps friendless and helpless, is no less an object of our sympathy, and appeals no less strongly to our friendly aid, than his struggling countrymen at home. This recalls the suggestion I made at the outset, and again a year ago, in my first annual report, as to the importance of establishing Immigrant Aid Societies in the chief cities. Individual effort may do much, is doing a great deal undoubtedly in New York, Boston, and elsewhere; but organization and effective co-operation are indispensable in a work of this magnitude."—Onahan, W. J. Second Annual Report to the Association. Onahan Scrapbook.

location of Catholic colonies in Texas had been submitted to them,¹⁰ and in January a communication had been published through the *Catholic Review* placing before the people the history and prospects of Arkansas as a field for colonization. In the opinion of the writer of the article the greatest need of that State in the year 1881 was "50,000 families of good honest working people to build more railroads and to keep all of them in good order, and to settle upon and cultivate millions of acres of splendid lands now lying waste." He foresaw that even a greater number than that would be added to the State during the next ten years.¹¹

In the spring of 1881 Bishop Spalding in company with Father Riordan of Chicago made a trip through Arkansas and Texas and was most favorably impressed with the possibilities of these states for colonization.¹² Therefore at the meeting in May when the prospect of establishing one or more colonies in Arkansas came up for discussion he was fully prepared to espouse the project. Bishop Fitzgerald of Little Rock had been invited to that meeting, and made a director of the Association. He proceeded at once to render what service he could to the society by setting forth the conditions of his State as he knew them. General Slack, land agent of the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railway and Col. Essex of the Iron Mountain Railroad had come from Arkansas with the Bishop and they both offered propositions to sell lands and furnish transportation to immigrants to Arkansas.¹³ The matter was thoroughly discussed and finally disposed of for the time by the appointment of a committee composed of Rev. D. J. Riordan, W. J. Onahan, and two others, to investigate the lands offered by the agents and to make a report to the President of the Association. In case this report proved favorable the President was empowered to authorize the organization of colonies and to make the necessary agreement with the railway companies for the

¹⁰ Catholic Review, January 1, 1881.

[&]quot;Ibid.

Western Watchman, undated Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook, 1881.
 Chicago Times, May 13, 1881.

lands. During the summer the committee visited Arkansas and made a careful examination of the prospects, reporting favorably to the President.¹⁴

Throughout the summer months Bishop Fitzgerald and Bishop Spalding kept interest in the prospective colony alive and looked after the necessary preliminary arrangements. They had hoped to secure some religious order of men as the nucleus of the colony, but were unable to do this. Therefore they went East to look for a priest to undertake the work. While there they used every available means to make the project known, and to settle questions relative to that and the other colonies. In Arkansas in the spring Bishop Spalding had made it a point to acquire by personal examination a knowledge of the State that was almost as complete as was that of Bishop Fitzgerald. He had been impressed most of all by the very apparent contentment of the German Catholics in the colonies that had been planted there three years before. Both he and Bishop Fitzgerald approved strongly of the site selected by the committee which had been sent out.15 Someone reminded Bishop Spalding that one of the earliest Catholic colonies in America was in Arkansas and that it was a failure. He replied at once that he had studied the history of that failure and found that it was almost entirely due to the fact that the project was premature, there being at the time no railroad facilities, but that even so the settlers who remained had become prosperous.16

It was reported in May, 1881, that the proposals entertained by the Board the previous September regarding the establishment of a colony in Dakota had not resulted in any definite conclusions, chiefly because the railroad company with which the directors had opened negotiations had withdrawn its offer owing to the fact that the

¹⁴ Catholic Review, August 20, 1881.

¹⁵ This location was between Little Rock and Fort Smith, "the gate of the wonderful Indian Territory and the Key of the Southwest."—Catholic Review, August 20, 1881.

¹⁶ Catholic Review, August 20, 1881.

managers had found it impossible to make good the terms originally proposed concerning land and location for colonies.¹⁷ Therefore when the directors met in the fall they could devote most of their attention to the consideration and planning of the Arkansas colony. Arrangements were made for the issue and circulation of a pamphlet descriptive of the region of the proposed settlement, of which pamphlet Father Nugent volunteered to secure the circulation of 10,000 copies in Ireland and England.¹⁸

This undertaking differed from that of Nebraska in that no land was to be bought by the Association. Further purchases were not possible with the amount of capital at the disposal of the directors. Even if the full amount of authorized capital had been paid in not much could have been ventured at this time in the way of further purchase of land, and there seemed to be no disposition on the part of anyone to try to enlarge the amount originally agreed upon. Therefore the arrangement in Arkansas provided for the securing of land under conditions as favorable as possible to the settler, leaving him to deal directly with the officials of the railroad or land company and make his settlements and payments immediately to them. This made it possible for the Association to carry out the chief purpose of its organization without employing any more capital, that is, to enable a sufficient number of Catholic families to be located near enough to one another to insure the presence of a priest, a church, and a Catholic school.

The history of the Arkansas colony will be included in that of the settlements of Minnesota in another chapter.

¹⁷ Parishes were organized in Dakota, chiefly through Rev. George Sheehan, acting with the Colonization Association. He induced many to go from Boston to Dakota and so was instrumental in the organization of parishes in the counties of Yankton, Turner, Hutchinson, and Douglas, where land was cheap. In 1884 he went to Boston in the interest of orphan children of the Home for Destitute Children of Boston and secured the adoption of some of them into the Catholic families of Dakota.—Boston *Pilot*, June 7, 1884.

¹⁸ Catholic Review, August 20, 1881.

Again came appeals to the Association to take up the work of caring for the Irish immigrants by providing some sort of protective and directive agency in English, Irish, and American ports.¹⁹

Finally in February, 1882, the Association decided to do what lay within its power to meet this pressing need. Protests there were still in the United States and in Ireland against this fleeing the Old Land just when there seemed to be some prospect of its recovery by the

The *Pilot* and the *Catholic Review* urged it constantly and forcefully. In 1880, Mr. P. V. Hickey, himself an Irish immigrant who had been for some years a resident of New York and who as editor of the *Catholic Review* had become familiar with the conditions of Irish immigration, wrote:

"Nothing can be conceived more deplorable than emigration from Ireland as it has been permitted to go on, by those who were, indeed, unable to prevent it, but who could have shaped it and thereby made it profitable to the poor exiles, a means of safety to them and a plentiful source of blessings to the Church and human civilization. Nothing can be said that is sufficiently terrible to describe the destruction of the Irish people by their compulsory flight from their native soil.

"It does not, however, require that terrible experience to know that the disruption of the family and the deprivation of a means of livelihood which are all involved in cutting adrift from the old home, are serious evils attending emigration even under the best circumstances. Under the worst possible circumstances, and these were exactly those under which the greater part of the deportation of the Irish was undertaken, what must emigration be?

"Fix the Irishman in Ireland and keep him at home, if you can, but if you cannot, is your duty performed in standing by, idly and mournfully, and deploring that the Irish are gone, hoping that they are gone with a vengeance, and that with it they will return? To ask the question is to answer it, and there are many Americans today who in answering it attach deep blame to the Irish leaders of the past, both those who would not help them here, and those in Ireland who should have helped them by money, knowledge, and guidance, but who neglected to recognize tremendous facts which, however deplorable, were, as it has been proved absolutely, inevitable. Cursing and condemning Irish emigration did not prevent it. A little activity, unselfishness and foresight might have made it less terrible to the emigrants while it would hardly have increased their number. . . .

"While we hope and pray that no one will ever attempt to withdraw from Ireland any family that can exist there, we do hope that honest business men will invest their wasting capital in finding on our western prairies, homes and lands and liberty for their distressed countrymen. They will make a great fortune for themselves and achieve fortune and things that are greater than fortune for their Irish countrymen."—Editor. Catholic Review, July 25, 1880.

¹⁹ Father Byrne in the Pilot, October 1, 1881.

native population, but they were unavailing. The Irish still came and something must be done to receive them.²⁰

Mr. Onahan suggested to the stockholders and the general readers of the published report that those who had already passed successfully through the first stages of pioneering be encouraged to emulate the example of certain German communities in Wisconsin where several families, approximately five, assisted the newcomers by lending them money, helping them to build their houses, to break the land, etc. These soon paid back their loans and were prepared in their turn to contribute to the settlement of another stranger. He pointed out that this would be merely doing in a small way what the Colonization Association had undertaken to do on a large scale and that it had worked out very satisfactorily wherever tried.²¹

He also announced the fact that although almost all the colony lands had been taken up in Nebraska there was much government and railroad land in the near vicinity held by the railroads and speculators, that could be had at prices varying from four dollars to ten dollars an acre, that a parish colony of some 300 families had been established in Howard County under the direction of the Jesuits and that there were the nuclei of Irish colonies on the Wood River in Hall County, and in Platt, Boone, Pawnee, and Holt Counties, in all of which Catholic settlers would find congenial surroundings. The largest and most flourishing of those colonies were the ones in Dakota County near Iowa and the O'Neill settlement in Holt County.²² There was still government land to be had in Hall and Custer Counties and railroad lines were being projected there.²⁸

At the May meeting the pastors of the colonies of the Association gave glowing accounts of their success and the treasurer showed

²⁰ At this February board meeting a letter was read from the Allan Line of steamers, offering to circulate pamphlets of the Association in Ireland and England and to co-operate with it in other respects.—Boston *Pilot*, February 18, 1882

²¹ Report, Onahan Scrapbook.

²² Both these settlements will be considered in a later chapter.
²³ Report, Onahan Scrapbook.

that the financial situation of the Association was excellent. \$30,000 in excess of the par value of the stock was reported, new sites for colonies in Dakota, Iowa, and Texas were discussed, and an additional location in Arkansas was proposed.

There had been such a notable increase in the value of the farming lands in Nebraska and Minnesota that the keenest regret was felt that the resources at the command of the society two and three years before had not admitted of its making more extensive purchases,²⁴ so that now when so much of the immigration was going West they might have cheap colony lands to offer to those who needed them.²⁵

Letters of inquiry from the United States, from Ireland and England, and even from Germany, Holland, Belgium, and France were being received constantly by the secretary and the pastors of the various colonies already established, and this impelled Mr. Onahan to urge again upon the directors the imperative need of emigrant societies in the principal cities of the East and the West. There should be provision made, he thought, for meeting the immigrant upon his arrival, to protect him from imposition, to direct him, and to take care of him generally until such time as he could be properly located. He reminded the other members of the Association that in Chicago there were German, Bohemian, and Scandinavian Emigrant Aid Societies for the protection and assistance of immigrants, but, except for the St. Patrick's Society, none for the Irish, and that the same was true in most of the seaboard cities.²⁶

Again in September the reports of the colonies of Nebraska and Minnesota left little to be desired, and Bishop Spalding and Bishop Fitzgerald engaged to make an effort in the East to fill the St. Patrick's Colony in Arkansas. At this meeting Father Nugent was present. For twelve years he had been concerned over the fate of

²⁴ Although land was sold by the Association even after its value had doubled, the price to colonists was never raised.

²⁵ Boston *Pilot*, April 29, 1882. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, June 17, 1882.

immigrants to America and had been instrumental in the salvation, temporal and spiritual, of many of them. He stated it as his conviction that in certain portions of the west of Ireland men could not live as they ought even if the land were given them rent free and they were allowed a shilling a day to cultivate it.²⁷ The English government was assisting them to emigrate and something must be done to meet their needs upon arrival here. He suggested that each congregation outside the large cities be prevailed upon to receive five of these families, provide occupation for them and put them in the way of becoming comfortably self-supporting.

The question of providing for the carrying on of the colonization work on the lines originally laid down by establishing a permanent fund from the balance left over after paying the shareholders the principal and a reasonable interest, was debated, and at once several stockholders signified their willingness to donate their shares outright to this purpose. Formal action was then taken looking to the carrying out of this specific design and the Secretary was instructed to correspond with the stockholders on the subject, but this action was delayed until after the May meeting.²⁸

At the close of the September meeting Bishop Spalding departed for Europe and the Holy Land, to be gone until the following May. He stopped in New York with Bishop Fitzgerald and lectured at the Church of the Immaculate Conception on the all-absorbing subject of Catholic colonization.

When the fourth annual meeting (May 2, 1883) convened the secretary announced that steps had finally been taken toward the establishment, under the auspices of the Association, of a Bureau of Information at Castle Garden, New York. Shortly after the meeting a circular was issued by the secretary explaining the plans for the proposed immigrant bureau.

²⁷ Northwestern Chronicle, March 20, 1880, (Letter of Father Nugent to Bishop Ireland).

²⁸ Secretary's Fourth Annual Report, May 2, 1883, Onahan Scrapbook.

Since the Board of Directors did not feel authorized to devote any of the funds of the Association to this purpose the members had empowered and requested the secretary to open a public subscription to provide for the salary of the priest to be appointed for the work and for the printing and distributing of pamphlets, giving reliable and impartial information as to land, rates, and opportunities for labor, etc., and in special cases, if means permitted, affording help to needy immigrants. In the subscription circular it was stated that the plans and methods were to be determined by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association under whose control the Bureau would be placed and that shares of stock in the Association would be received in aid of this fund and credited at par.²⁹

Before the annual meeting of 1884 arrangements had been completed for assigning a resident priest to Castle Garden under the auspices of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association which assumed the entire responsibility for the financial burden of the work. Father John J. Riordan of St. Bernard's parish, New York, was appointed by the Cardinal for the position and began at once to organize the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary. He and Mr. Onahan made a trip to St. Louis to see if they might secure for this purpose some portion of the Mullanphy Fund but seem not to have been successful in this.³⁰

In April, 1884, the Association issued a circular announcing the appointment of Father Riordan to the position of chaplain of the Castle Garden Mission and the assumption by the Association of all responsibility for his salary and expenses while engaged in the work. His duties consisted in attending at Castle Garden daily to look after

The subscriptions received at once were:

²⁹ Circular, Onahan Scrapbook, May, 1883.

³⁰ Undated clipping, St. Louis Globe Democrat, Onahan Scrapbook.

the newly arriving immigrants and to co-operate with the authorities there in guarding them against danger and imposition, imparting needed information regarding different sections of the country, lands, opportunities for employment, etc., and giving special attention to the protection of immigrant girls.31

The salary of Father Riordan was placed at \$1000 a year and the expenses of the Mission would of course be considerably more than that.32 Therefore the circular referred to above also asked for contributions to the permanent colonization fund to be used for the maintenance of the Bureau and for placing on a secure footing the general work of colonization. It was suggested that such shareholders as chose to do so might apply their stock towards this fund.33

What was emphasized very particularly was the fact that neither the Association nor the Immigrant Bureau had any thought of encouraging immigration, but only of directing it. Father Riordan's work was to provide a mission chapel and a training school and home for friendless girls, where, under the care of the Sisters of Mercy, they might receive temporary shelter until they could be provided with suitable employment in respectable families and in the meantime be instructed in the duties they might be called upon to perform in their new avocation. Many of these girls had never had the advantage of such training.

One of the most important features of Father Riordan's mission was to be to encourage immigrants from the agricultural districts of Ireland and other countries to settle upon the fertile lands of the West instead of drifting into the over-crowded labor markets of the eastern cities—a policy which had already contributed so largely to the deterioration and demoralization of the Irish by consigning them

³¹ Circular, April, 1884, *Onahan Scrapbook*.
³² On one Sunday of 1885 he sent thirty needy emigrants to boarding houses at a cost of seventy-five cents each, making one item of \$22.50. His total expenses up to that time (April 29, 1885) amounted to about \$2000. Besides that, he was trying at that time to collect enough money for a Home for immigrant girls and for a chapel. Letter, Onahan Scrapbook.

23 Circular, April 15, 1884, Onahan Scrapbook.

to "fever nests and nurseries of crime" in the tenement districts of the large cities. He would be prepared to give reliable information to families desiring to settle in the West and to help them to reach their destination.

To this end he traveled through the West and established corresponding bureaus at Chicago, St. Louis, Omaha, St. Paul, and Buffalo, and at Castle Garden he organized the Society of Our Lady of the Rosary, in which he enrolled several thousand members in the United States on payment of a small annual subscription (25 cents) in aid of the Mission. In order to extend the Society into Ireland, England, Scotland, France, Germany, and Italy he sailed for Europe in the summer of 1884.

While in Ireland he made it clear that his mission there was chiefly to discourage wholesale and especially reckless emigration from Ireland. He declared that then (1884) there were brighter prospects for the Irishman at home than across the sea—that America was not for him the land of plenty it had been in '47 and '48, that other immigrants, especially the German, were far outnumbering the Irish, while the immigration on the whole was very large, and that the result was that work was scarce and wages were low. In America, he told them were "Irishmen eating out their hearts in poverty, sickness, and hopeless longing." Fewer, not more Irishmen, were needed in America, whereas in Ireland, with the prospect of an Irish Parliament and the success of the Land and Laborers Acts and the Fisheries and Tramway Acts, more were needed.³⁴

The chief discussion of the stockholders' meeting of 1884 centered around the Castle Garden Mission. The advisability of concluding the affairs of the Association to the end that its work be turned over to laymen was also seriously considered. This brought forth from the *Catholic Review* an editorial, part of which we quote, because it summarizes the history of the Association for the five years of its activities—its prospects, its success, and its influence:

³⁴ Weekly News, Dublin, August 30, 1884. Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

It was a business venture and conducted on business principles, but it did not seem likely that the company's shares would be rapidly taken up. It had the air of a charity about it, and the shrewd investors of American money prefer to avoid charity associations. Bishop Ireland was at the head of the undertaking, and Bishop Spalding was president of the Association with many ecclesiastics and prominent laymen supporting them. It looked like a rash venture. Much, too, depended on it. If it failed, the consequences would be serious. Any public attempt to aid the Irish emigrant might not again be made in years. If it succeeded, a new era would open for the friendless exile. People shook their heads and closed their pocket-books. Clever men were at the head of it, and they did not like to prophesy failure, but they were sure it would not succeed.

Well, after five years it has succeeded. Here is a notice from the

Secretary of the Association:

"The Secretary of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association gives notice that shareholders who desire to surrender their certificates of stock for redemption will receive the par value for the same, \$100 per share. . . . Seventeen percent in dividends has been paid

on this stock since date of issue. W. J. Onahan, Sec."

Seventeen per cent in five years is not bad. The Association is living, besides, and is able to pay dollar for dollar on its shares. It has done its work silently and has no crowing over its success. It asks for no praise, but it is going to be overwhelmed with congratulations. All thanks are due to those who labored to bring about this successful contribution to the solving of the emigrant problem; to the Right Rev. Bishops who went about the country explaining to Catholics the aim and methods of the Association, giving their time and their great names to render its inception less difficult; to the officials whose careful management turned discouragement into joy and to the generous share-purchasers whose cash made possible the event, when hundreds openly sneered or doubted or withdrew.

The good that has been done cannot be estimated. Besides the families immediately benefited since the founding of the Association, the success of the venture means the formation of a hundred like companies and the consequent benefit to thousands of struggling Catholic families. Money will be plentiful enough when the imitators of the company enter the field, but the men who braved the first shock of a doubtful struggle ought not, will not, be forgotten.³⁵

³⁵ Catholic Review, May 31, 1884.

What the reason for the Association's decision was we have been unable to discover. In a letter to the Catholic Review, January 14, 1885, Mr. Onahan states simply that the directors had some time previously expressed "their determination to wind up the affairs and business of the Association so far at least as any financial responsibility to the shareholders was concerned." He reminds his readers that under the most favorable conditions this would necessarily take some time since the contracts with colonists and payments still to be made ran in most cases for several years more, but practically, as to any extension of the work in hand, the directors were disinclined to enter into any new undertakings. They preferred to let others occupy the field and with fresh capital and new management, push on the work of colonization. "It is not necessary," he adds, "that I should explain the causes which have led the directors to this decision, against the wishes and contrary to the expectations of many of the warmest friends and most enthusiastic supporters of the enterprise. Sufficient that the decision has been acquiesced in and accepted. It is now conclusive as to all concerned in the general management and will be faithfully carried out." 36

In his communication to the *Pilot*, after telling of the withdrawal of the bishops from colonization as a financial undertaking, he writes: "Why this decision was arrived at and finally accepted as a settled policy, it is not necessary to the purpose of this letter to indicate more precisely." ³⁷

On November 17, 1884, at the time of the meeting of the American prelates in Baltimore for the Third Plenary Council, Mr. Onahan issued an invitation to the bishops and archbishops and to Catholic business men to attend a meeting in Baltimore on November 18 to hear from the Directors of the Association reports on the progress and condition of the colonies, and suggestions as to the future operations of the Association. Mr. Onahan delivered the

³⁶ Catholic Review, January 14, 1885.

³⁷ Circular, November 17, 1884, Onahan Scrapbook.

opening address. He outlined the history of the Association and of its latest project; namely, the establishment of an immigrant bureau at Castle Garden. Then Father Riordan reported on the situation there and the great need of help that existed for the Catholic, especially the Irish Catholic immigrant. He and Mr. Onahan both expressed the wish that the matter be presented at one of the sessions of the Council so that all the bishops of the country could be informed of it and be induced to lend it their support.

Bishop Spalding said that the plan of the Association had so far succeeded that the members came now with practical experience and the test of time to ask Catholics to make it an organization extending all over the country. Bishops, he believed, could give an impulse to the movement by encouraging it, but he was convinced that Catholic laymen should take it up and make of it an enterprise of national proportions.³⁸

Mr. Onahan said later that he wished it were in his power to repeat the eloquent address made by Bishop Spalding, who, with characteristic force and power, depicted the blessings and advantages certain to result from the continuance and extension of the work of Catholic colonization.³⁹ Mr. Onahan himself was invited to visit several Eastern cities with the view of canvassing the situation and prospects among Catholic capitalists and seeing what it was possible to do. Everywhere he was cordially received, but nothing definite was arranged at that time although from several prominent Catholics he received assurances of support "when the proper time should come around." In Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston there seemed to be a concurrence of opinion that the project of a new company was practicable and would be likely to meet with ready support.⁴⁰

A tentative plan for a company to carry on colonization operations in the West was drawn up by Mr. Onahan, who believed such a

 ³⁸ Catholic Mirror, November 22, 1884.
 ³⁹ Catholic Review, January 14, 1885.
 ⁴⁰ Undated clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

company could be organized under the laws of Illinois with a capital of perhaps \$500,000 with the power to increase it to \$1,000,000, in shares of \$1000 or a less sum. He thought one-half of this capital could be taken in New York and the rest in the other large cities of the country. The headquarters could be in New York and the treasurer some prominent banker of that city. He assumed that if the new company desired it, the existing Association could be used as the agency for carrying on the work of colonization, but free from any of the financial responsibility to shareholders, and that, as a matter of course, the western bishops would lend the organization their friendly co-operation. He subjoined to his plan an appeal to Catholic capitalists to take up the work at once.⁴¹

A letter from Father Stephen Byrne to Mr. Onahan affords us some idea of the impression received by both these men of the apathy of wealthy Irish Catholics in the matter of Catholic colonization. On January 23 Father Byrne, after commenting on Mr. Onahan's article that had recently appeared in the *Catholic Review*, wrote, "I have not an overstock of faith in the rich men of our race as a body. I have seen a good deal of them, too; but something may come when it is made clear to them that their interests may so surely be linked with their charity." ⁴²

On January 25 he wrote again, remarking that he and Mr. Onahan must have been writing each other at the same time, and adding: "We had the very same idea too about the wealthy people of our race." Which leads us to suspect that Mr. Onahan was not so confident of success in this new enterprise as in his printed article he would seem to have been.⁴³

⁴¹ Catholic Review, January 14, 1885: "Precious opportunities have been allowed to slip away in the past. If the present occasion be not seized and land acquired while it is yet possible, in terms within reach and reason, then, indeed, may we soon write the concluding chapter of the history of Catholic and Irish colonization; and the caption of that chapter will be the ominous and prophetic words employed forty years ago by the lamented Thomas D'Arcy M'Gee, writing on the same subject with the same purpose, 'Too late!'

⁴² Letter, Onahan Scrapbook, 1885. ⁴³ Ibid.

In reviewing the work of the Colonization Association in the New York Freeman's Journal, December 6, 1884, the editor ascribes much of its success to the indefatigable labors of Mr. Onahan, but adds.

Without the approval and active co-operation of the Rt. Rev. Bishops Ireland, O'Connor, and Spalding and the other Rt. Rev. and reverend gentlemen who sympathized so practically with this experiment, and watched it so anxiously, Mr. Onahan and his friends would have been powerless. . . The Rt. Rev. Bishops have finished their part of the work. They enabled an experiment to be tried which could never have been attempted without them. They retire, after the successful end of the work, to leave the field to such Catholic laymen as have not, in gaining this world's goods, lost interest in preserving the Faith in the hearts of the friendless Catholic immigrants. It was an experiment that in other hands might have been full of peril. It is an honorable completion of a noble plan which Providence and foresight narrowed somewhat; but which has been wholly successful.44

In the notice to stockholders that was sent out by the Secretary in April, 1885, we read that 20% of the outstanding stock had been redeemed at par and 6% interest, and that the policy of the Board was to redeem and cancel the stock as fast and to such an extent as the resources of the Association would justify.45

By 1886, \$30,000 of the stock had been redeemed and some \$3000 donated as a basis for a Permanent Colonization Fund. The Directors expected to be able to redeem one-half of the outstanding stock during that year and the remainder the following year.46

The Circular of April 24, 1888, announced the annual meeting and stated that \$50,000 had been paid off and that the Directors intended to close up the affairs of the Association that year. 47

Finally, in 1891 this was done. In the circular of that year Mr.

⁴⁴ New York Freeman's Journal, December 6, 1884, Clipping, Onahan Scrabbook.

⁴⁶ Circular to Shareholders, April 15, 1885, Onahan Scrapbook. ⁴⁰ Circular, April 10, 1886, Onahan Scrapbook. ⁴¹ Ibid. April 24, 1888.

Onahan congratulated the shareholders in that the objects for which the Association was organized had been faithfully carried out. The colonies established by it in Nebraska and Minnesota were on a firm and satisfactory footing, and the colonists on the road to prosperity. In conclusion he stated that "while the Association was not organized or carried on as a money-making enterprise, it has nevertheless paid the investors six per cent annually in dividends, and now at the close returns to the shareholders the full sum of their original investment with one year's additional interest." 48

We may conclude, therefore, that the Irish Catholic Colonization Association, of which Bishop Spalding was President to the end, was a success. Whatever the cause, there had not been adequate response to the appeals made. The managers of the Association did what they could with the funds subscribed and paid in, but if there had been quick generous response they could have enlarged their field of activity. However we must not, and those who fostered it, who participated in its promising beginnings, who shared in its gallant struggle to live and grow, and who quietly closed the books, never did consider the movement a failure. It was a philanthropic work, although based on sound business principles, and it attained its end. It aimed to enable those Irish Catholics who wished to settle on the land to do so, providing them with every facility for the practice of their religion and the education of their children. In 1801 all the colonists were in comfortable homes on farms of their own. They were close to the church and the school

There had never been any possibility of failure. The active co-operation of such prelates as Archbishop Ireland, Bishop Spalding, and Bishop O'Connor gave the highest spiritual sanction to the undertaking, while the fact that Mr. W. J. Onahan had charge of the business and financial details was a sure guarantee that conscientious straightforwardness and energy would characterize this department of the work.49

⁴⁸ Circular, July 25, 1891, Onahan Scrapbook.
⁴⁹ Catholic Review, undated clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

But although the Irish Catholic Colonization Association had ceased to exist, its influence continued. As the first year of lecturing and writing influenced the general colonization movement by giving a "wide and powerful impulse to it in all sections of the country" and "greatly swelled the Catholic contingent in the westward tide," so did the ten years of work point the way to philanthropic and financial success even though the Society itself, through lack of resources, was limited in the scope of its operations.⁵⁰ It was a magnificent conception that could have been a magnificent success, if there had been right understanding of it and generous co-operation with it. To the success it did achieve the heart and mind, the voice and pen of Bishop Spalding were indispensable.

⁵⁰ Devos, Julius, Letter.

Chapter V

IRISH CATHOLIC COLONIES IN MINNESOTA AND ARKANSAS

Before 1879 Irish Catholic colonization had been attempted in Minnesota, Arkansas and Nebraska under the direction, or at least with the sympathetic co-operation of bishops. In 1839 Bishop Loras took charge of his diocese that included the present States of Iowa and Minnesota, and began at once to secure land for churches, schools, and convents, and then, in order to promote Catholic migration to his extensive diocese, he sent to the newspapers of the United States and Europe articles intended to induce settlers to come. His endeavors were so successful that he found the task of providing for the spiritual and temporal wants of his colonies an absorbing one.1

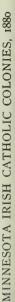
When the diocese was divided in 1851, Bishop Crétin was placed over Minnesota where he prosecuted the work of Catholic colonization vigorously.2 Several years later (1857-58) General James Shields, attracted by the fertility of the soil and the beauty of the lake and forest scenery of the region near Faribault in Rice County, led thither a group of Irish Catholics from Illinois and established the successful colony of Shieldsville.3 The settlement prospered so well that in 1879 it could boast of 250 Irish Catholic families. Settlers continued to come after the colony land had all been occupied and thus the townships of Kilkenny, Montgomery, and Erin are the direct fruits of General Shields' colonization labors.4

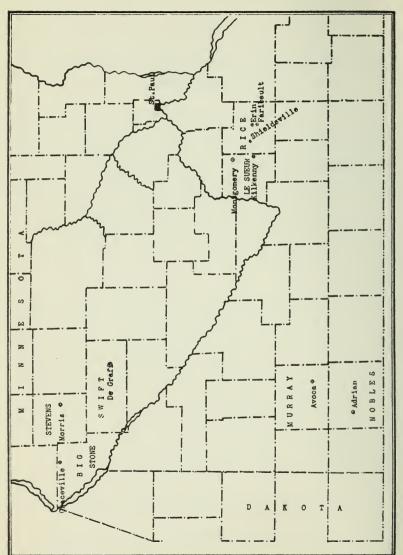
Dillon O'Brien pleaded the cause of Irish Catholic colonization to

¹ Spalding, Religious Mission, pp. 168-69; Kempfer, "A Decennium of the Catholic Church in Lee County, Iowa," Catholic Historical Researches, April,

Spalding, Religious Mission, p. 169.

Undated clippings, Northwestern Chronicle, Onahan Scrapbook, 1879.
Undated clippings, Northwestern Chronicle, Onahan Scrapbook, 1879.





Minnesota so constantly and so eloquently that in 1879 Archbishop Ireland made the experiment of a pioneer colony, called De Graff, in Swift County, about 120 miles from St. Paul. It proved so successful that by September, 1881, there were about 800 families located there in four thriving villages, each of which had its church and school, grain elevators, shops, and stores.⁵ Encouraged by this success Archbishop Ireland and Mr. O'Brien founded other colonies until the Irish Catholic settlements covered approximately 300,000 acres.⁶

Adrian in Nobles County was plotted in 1878. There, too, after securing 70,000 acres from the St. Paul and Sioux City Railway Company, Archbishop Ireland began colonization work. In 1879 the control of 8,000 acres of this land in the Adrian colony was transferred by Archbishop Ireland to the Irish Catholic Colonization Association, and farms of 160 acres were sold to settlers, for whom houses were built and a portion of the land "broken" before their arrival.

Archbishop Ireland's method had been to obtain from the railroad, either directly or through the Minnesota Catholic Colonization Bureau, the right to dispose of certain tracts of their land-grants. In this way he could establish a priest in the selected district and sell

⁵ Catholic Review, September 24, 1881, July 12, 1879; Northwestern Chronicle, February 8, 1879; The Pilot, June 6, 1879, September 6, 1879; Egan, "Irish Immigration to Minnesota, 1865-1890," Mid-America, October, 1929, January, 1930.

Catholic Review, September 24, 1881. In Swift County one could travel from Dublin to Kildare, from Cashel to Tara and Clontarf, and do honor on the way to the memory of St. Michael, St. Joseph and St. Francis.—Northwestern Chronicle, April 5, 1879.

St. Joseph and St. Francis.—Northwestern Chronicle, April 5, 1879.

Tegan, "Irish Immigration to Minnesota," Mid-America, p. 150.

In these prairie lands that had not yet been brought under cultivation it was necessary to "break" the soil in June a year in advance of the sowing of the first crop. The roots of the grass that has been growing for centuries holds the upturned sod in a compact and matted mass which will break up only after it has been frozen and thawed. Vegetables and corn can be grown after the first plowing, but in both Nebraska and Minnesota wheat constituted an early and profitable and necessary crop. Therefore it was to the great advantage of the settler to have a portion of his farm land "broken" and in readiness for the spring plowing and planting.

the lands to Catholic colonists. The price asked was somewhat higher than that charged by the railroad, necessarily so in order that the Bureau be provided with funds for the carrying out of its work, and easily so because an exceptionally low price was placed by the railway company upon land sold in large quantities. The land of the Adrian Colony was particularly low in price because at the time of the agreement with the company it was situated many miles from the railroad.

The total cost to the Adrian colonist of 160 acres of land, house, and breaking of thirty acres amounted to \$1,174. It was required that \$50.00 be paid at the time of purchase, 10% of the principal after the second crop had been harvested, another 10% the following year, and thereafter 20% yearly until all had been paid¹¹

The colony lands were marked off in 160 acre tracts, oblong in shape, one-fourth of a mile wide and one mile long, with the houses at one end, and therefore only one-fourth of a mile apart. This arrangement was calculated to facilitate social intercourse and to diminish the loneliness of country life that sometimes becomes so oppressive in the first years of pioneering experience.¹²

In April, 1880, twenty-eight or thirty Irish families, numbering about 100 persons, mostly from Boston, took up lands that they had purchased in Adrian from the Association. They went out in charge of General M. T. Donaghue, representative of the railroad, and Mr. Wm. H. Bodfish, representative of Rev. J. P. Bodfish, the acting agent of the Association in Minnesota. The pastor of

10 In April, 1879, the conditions for time contracts for lands in the Adrian

colony were as follows:

¹² Spalding, Religious Mission, p. 194.

⁹ Egan, op. cit., pp. 146-48.

Cost price: \$5.00 to \$7.50 per acre (discount of 20% for cash). Time purchases: At time of purchase, one-tenth of principal and interest on unpaid principal; second year, interest only; third year, one-fourth of remaining principal and interest on unpaid principal; same for 3 ensuing years.—"Catholic Colonization as Actually Established," Catholic World, XXIV, (1879).

¹¹ Egan, op. cit., pp. 155-56.

¹³ The Pilot, April 3, 1880; Northwestern Chronicle, February 28, 1880. ¹⁴ The Pilot, April 3, 1880.

Adrian, Rev. Father Knauff, met them at the station on the morning of their arrival, provided breakfast for them, and in the afternoon sent the men in wagons to look at their farms. By the following day most of the colonists had established themselves in their new homes and were beginning eagerly to "put in their crops" with the seed wheat which Archbishop Ireland had provided for them.¹⁵

The letters that were sent "back East" were so filled with enthusiasm that other groups quickly followed, and although there were hard years, some discouragement, and a few failures, the colony prospered. Archbishop Ireland's report to the Irish Catholic Colonization Association in May, 1880, indicated that only two farms were still unsold, and Father Knauff's of 1882 that the total number of Catholic families was 250.16

We content ourselves with this bare outline of the Minnesota colony because its history has been treated at length by Dr. Howard E. Egan in his article on Irish Immigration to Minnesota, already cited. However, there is an interesting incident in the history of Irish Catholic colonization in Minnesota in the year 1880 that may well be touched upon here, even though it had no direct connection with the work of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association. It is the story of the "Connemaras," referred to in an earlier chapter.

Mention is made here of this particular project for two reasons: In the first place, although the Irish Catholic Colonization Association assumed no responsibility for it, its failure has been imputed at times to the Association. Secondly, the causes to which its lack of success may be attributed point to the wisdom of the Association, which had guarded against the possibility of failure from these very causes.

It was Father Nugent of Liverpool who sent the "Connemaras" to America, and Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul who adopted them.

¹⁵ One is struck with the contrast between these conditions of settlement and the heart-breaking hardship and loneliness and discouragement of the isolated settlers on the western prairies.

¹⁶ Reports of the Association, May, 1880; May, 1882, Onahan Scrabbook.

Father Nugent was well known at that time both in England and America as a temperance advocate and general friend of humanity. He was a man of about sixty years and had long been the chaplain of the Liverpool prison. Apart from his duties there he had found time in 1865 to establish a Home for boys—waifs that he picked up in the streets and alleys and for whom he was providing a sound education, including preparation for following some trade. 17 Now. in 1880 he conceived the idea of transplanting directly to the American Catholic colonies a group of destitute Irish families from the West of Ireland where the people were paying five pounds and more for holdings of three to five acres of land that was of so wretched a character that even in favorable seasons they could do nothing more than live upon it, and but for the supplemental help they gained from going to labor in England would leave them always in desperate want. He wrote to Archbishop Ireland that it would be a blessing to the emigrants and to those left behind if one hundred families could be removed to America and that if co-operation could be secured on this side he knew that a few Liverpool gentlemen would help him to send them across the Atlantic.18

At once a meeting was held in Chicago to raise funds to assist fifty of these families to the colony lands in Nebraska and an appeal was made in the Northwestern Chronicle to the people of Minnesota, urging them not to be backward in doing likewise for their state.19 Archbishop Ireland cabled to Father Nugent the offer to provide for fifty families, guaranteeing transportation from the seaboard to St. Paul. His appeal to the manager of several trunk lines from New York to the West took care of this matter and the people of Minnesota responded whole-heartedly to the request made of them. The Chicago meeting came to naught,20 but in Minnesota a sufficient amount (about \$5000.00) was raised to enable Archbishop Ireland to

¹⁸ Northwestern Chronicle, March 20, 1880.

²⁰ Catholic Review, April 10, 1880.

provide each of his fifty families with eighty acres of land, a yoke of oxen, and a house. He was prepared also to keep the immigrants all winter in food and clothing. In the spring their farms, on each of which five acres had already been broken, would be ready for tillage.²¹

On June 11 the Connemara peasants, about 300 persons, set sail from Galway on the *Austrian* under the auspices of Archbishop Ireland and the people of Minnesota, of Father Nugent and the priests of Connemara. The enterprise was highly eulogized in most of the papers but at the outset it met with condemnation from the Liverpool branch of the Irish National Land League which even called the would-be benefactors the "Minnesota enemies of Ireland."²² At that time Charles Stuart Parnell was lecturing in America in the interests of the League and his efforts and those of other Land Leaguers to keep the people from emigrating from Ireland may have been at least responsible for the failure of the Chicago meeting in the interest of Father Nugent's protégés.

It is easy to understand the attitude of the Land League agitators. They wanted the Irish to stay in Ireland and become possessors of the land. But in the meantime many of them, especially in the West of Ireland, could scarcely eke out a livelihood. Numbers of them had holes for houses, scant clothing, no furniture, and little food. In a hard season many of them actually died of starvation.²³ It was to prevent the decimation of the Irish population by hunger and misery that Father Nugent turned to Archbishop Ireland and colonization.

²¹ This land had been procured from the railroad for \$4.00 an acre, but it seemed probable that this particular tract which was known as "railroad indemnity property" would revert to the government and in that case the settlers would have it, by right of the squatter, without cost. It was in Big Stone County, on the borders of Dakota and in close proximity to the Irish Catholic Colony of Graceville.

²² Catholic Review, June 19, 1880. ²³ Northwestern Chronicle, March 20, 1880. (Letter of Father Nugent to Bishop Ireland.)

In the work of settling the Connemaras the Bishop received invaluable aid from Dillon O'Brien. As the agent of Archbishop Ireland Mr. O'Brien traveled to New York in June of 1880 to meet the immigrants and to endeavor to arouse the sympathies of the generous to the extent of securing additional means for their conveyance to the West. The funds placed at his disposal by the Archbishop were enough to provide for the bare necessities of the journey but because these people had been selected from among the most destitute, and, moreover, had passed through a siege of hardship that was unusual even for them and had thereafter endured the misery of a steerage journey, it was expected that their condition upon landing would be pitiable.²⁴ And indeed if the description given in the New York Herald can be believed, it was.25

Mr. Onahan met Mr. O'Brien and his charges at the station in Chicago and remained with them throughout the day, during which the St. Patrick's society provided them with meals, and Rev. Father Cashman and others supplied them with clothing and food. To the people of Chicago their condition seemed simply appalling. It showed plainly the dire poverty and misery to which they had always been accustomed. "The famine was visible in their pinched and emaciated faces, and in the shriveled limbs—they could scarcely be called legs and arms—of the children. Their features were quaint, and the entire company was squalid and wretched. It was a painful revelation to all who witnessed it." 26

The same generous welcome was accorded the wayfarers in St. Paul. Archbishop Ireland and committees and delegations of people

²⁴ Catholic Review, June 26, 1880. ²⁵ Catholic Review, July 3, 1880, (quoting New York Herald). "Dillon O'Brien remarked to a friend while the people were eating before starting on the trip West, 'It does look bad, but I'll wager a new hat that before twenty years some of these same people will come to Boston dressed in broadcloth; that they put up at your best hotel and eat at the best table in

²⁸ Catholic Review, January 1, 1881, (quoting Mr. Onahan to the Chicago Tribune).

in that city and vicinity met them at the station and provided for them in every way. The Archbishop had arranged for positions for forty-five young men and thirty-five girls, with various employment in St. Paul, thereby enabling them to help care for their families during the winter.²⁷

At Graceville, near their destination, the settlers met them and conducted them to the farms prepared for them. Each was a tract of 160 acres, some of which had been broken in preparation for the next spring planting. On each farm a house had been built and provided with the necessary furniture, and each family was supplied with clothing for two years and provisions for two months. Then the surplus of all that had been collected was expended for fuel and food for the winter. This was stored at Graceville to be distributed to the colonists as needed. It was expected that they would accept whatever employment was offered in the neighborhood and thus help to provide for themselves.

In September Bishop Spalding and Archbishop Ireland, with several priests, visited Graceville and the Connemara colony.²⁸ They went to the homes of 100 of the 400 Catholic families in Big Stone County.²⁹ With respect to the Irish-Americans the report was enthusiastic both as to the colonists themselves, all of whom were evidently happy, satisfied, and doing well, and as to the land, which was declared to be not only beautiful but most fertile, "the surface an undulating prairie, affording a sufficient watershed to every farm,

²⁷ Catholic Review, July 17, 1880.

²⁸ It was on this trip that one evening after dark the little company lost its way and after a brief consultation disposed themselves for the night in a stack of newly-mown fragrant prairie-hay. Doubtless the bishops enjoyed the experience even more than did their companions of lesser dignity.—Northwestern Chronicle, September 11, 1880.

²⁰ In all there were over 500 Catholic families there from nearly every state in the Union, averaging three to a section, whereas in March, 1878, when the colony lands were opened there had not been a single Catholic family in the county.—*Ibid*.

and not leaving even a square foot unfit for cultivation." The production of wheat in this place was particularly satisfactory and the prospect of the coming of the railroad within a month's time bespoke greater prosperity in the near future.³⁰

Here it was that the bishops found the "Connemaras." We have seen how these people had been provided for on their arrival. All summer there had been so great a demand for labor among their neighbors that they had had ample opportunity to contribute largely towards their own support, but on this visit Archbishop Ireland received the first intimation of the possibility of trouble with them.³¹ Here and there he heard a protest against the kind of work they were given to do by the other farmers, or against the treatment accorded them by their employers, and he detected among four or five a disposition to a too great reliance upon their protectors, even to the extent of shirking work. He met this difficulty by instituting at Graceville a system of public works and promising a dollar a day to all who would offer themselves for it. Those who were unemployed were given their choice between this and a cutting off of provisions. "The grumbling ceased and all went to work for the farmers who were paying \$1.50 or \$2.00 a day." 32

Early in the fall he made plans for guarding his charges against want during the winter and for giving them a good start in the spring, provided always that they would work as long as work was to be had. He had confidence in them—believed that they were industrious and grateful and would be a credit to the colony. He was prepared to give them time to adjust themselves to their environment and he and Dillon O'Brien were ready to extend to them all the help necessary to do this.

As winter, an unusually early and severe one, set in, rumors of

³⁰ Northwestern Chronicle, September 11, 1880.

³¹ A Gaelic scholar was required to assist at the interviews but before they were over both Bishop Ireland and Bishop Spalding had become versed in the Irish language. *Northwestern Chronicle*, September 11, 1880.

³² *Northwestern Chronicle*, September 11, 1880.

great suffering among the "Connemaras" became afloat. Some of the newspapers took this up and held Archbishop Ireland and Dillon O'Brien responsible for the reported situation. Of course, there was some foundation for the stories that were being told, but the fact is that Father Nugent and Archbishop Ireland had been deceived in the first place about these families. They had been led to believe that men accustomed to cultivating a small farm of a few acres and who therefore would know something about agriculture and would, at any rate, be eager to learn the science of farming on a large scale. were being sent to them. It developed that those who came were onehalf fishermen and one-half paupers, and as such were entirely unfit to cope with the environment in which they had been placed. This made the self-imposed task of their benefactors a well-nigh impossible one.33 When we add to this the consideration that in the beginning these people were furnished with all things needful, inclusive of food and clothing, it is not hard to understand how they could come to think that those who brought them here must keep them here. At all events, some of them certainly lacked spirit and on some occasions aroused the righteous indignation of their more enterprising neighbors.34

The first printed report of suffering among the Connemara people came through a "board of trade" of Morris, a little town near Graceville,³⁵ and like it, situated on the railroad. When Graceville grew to be a town of importance in the region a jealousy of its prosperity developed in Morris. This is one explanation of the eager-

³⁸ Interview, February, 1929, Judge T. D. O'Brien, son of Dillon O'Brien. ³¹ Mr. O'Brien gives one instance of this in his report to the New York Sun in March, 1881.

[&]quot;Last winter," he says, "when the snow was too deep for horses and sleighs, the other farmers in the colony bought flour at the Society's station and drew it by hand on sleds over the snow to their homes. The Connemara men would not take the flour away, although to them it was a free gift. Some of the other farmers, when a sum was offered them to carry the flour to the homes of the Connemara men, said that they were willing enough to make a dollar, but that they would not turn their hands to benefit such a lazy people." New York Sun, copied in Catholic Review, March 26, 1881.

³⁵ See map, p. 104.

ness with which certain men of the town seized upon rumors of discontent and suffering among the Irish colonists. According to Mr. Onahan:

The condition of the Connemara people, from the nature of things could not be painted in a very picturesque light. It is not to be expected that they would be furnished with all the conveniences of life in their prairie homes. If their shanties were cold, it was because they had neglected to sod them as they were advised to do. If their potatoes were frozen, they had plainly omitted to dig cellars for their protection. If, perhaps, they have suffered from the lack of fuel, it must be remembered that they suffered in common with the prairie population of the extreme northwest generally. This suffering grew out of the fuel famine and the dearth of railroad transportation for coal, and the early setting in of the winter. This was not peculiar to the Graceville colony, but was general all over the State of Minnesota.³⁶

However, allegations of neglect were rife against Archbishop Ireland and Mr. O'Brien, and this in spite of the fact that these two were in the main responsible for all the assistance that had been rendered to the settlers. Through the exertions of Mr. O'Brien money was raised when needed, \$30 here and \$40 there, and he undertook the heavy task of seeing to the distribution of necessaries among the people. And all the while Archbishop Ireland was making a personal contribution of some \$600 each month for the same purpose.³⁷

The full account of the conditions as they actually existed is given in the December and January issues of the *Northwestern Chronicle*. Suffice it to say that representatives from Morris, and Mr. O'Brien from St. Paul went to the settlement to investigate the matter. Although it was proven that most of the accounts of suffering were entirely untrue or were gross exaggerations of the truth, the experience was a decidedly painful one for the men most

³⁶ Catholic Review, January 1, 1881, (quoting Mr. Onahan to the Chicago Tribune).

²⁷ Catholic Review, January 1, 1881. Interview, February, 1929, Judge O'Brien.

deeply interested in the success of the colony. The point we wish to make is that it must not be taken as an argument against the Irish Catholic Colonization Association or the Catholic Bureau of Colonization of St. Paul or any other society formed for the purpose of colonizing Irish-Americans. The history of this colony simply serves to demonstrate the wisdom of these societies in confining their activities to the task of affording assistance to the Irish who had lived for a time in America, who had had some experience of American ways, and who, albeit in the mine or factory, had begun their struggle for independence. Even in the work of emigrant aid that it was soon to undertake our Association had no wish to encourage, much less to assist, emigration from Ireland. Nevertheless, even though the life of a Minnesota farmer was entirely new to the people from Connemara and it was necessary for them to take time to adapt themselves to the situation in which they were placed, it seems certain that they would have accomplished this if left to the care of Archbishop Ireland, Dillon O'Brien, their pastors, and those men in the neighboring settlements who had had experience of pioneer life, who felt a generous sympathy for these people of their race, and who knew best just how much and what kind of service to render them.

From the beginning the *Pioneer Press* of St. Paul had printed impartially all the "findings" of the Morris people and of Mr. O'Brien. In January, 1881, the editor, though "by no means a partisan of Catholicity or its interests," and somewhat too much inclined to place undue emphasis on the unfitness of the "Connemaras" for colonization, bore the following testimony to Archbishop Ireland's treatment of them:

Bishop Ireland's letter on the subject of the Connemara colony will be read with great interest. He freely admits that he has got an elephant on his hands in these twenty-four families. In transporting them as an act of charity, from the wild mountains of Galway to homes on the prairies of Minnesota he supposed they were, like most of the Irish emigrants to this state, an industrious and thrifty, though in this case, a poverty-stricken people. He found that

they were mostly paupers and beggars. He had a tough problem before him. That problem was to convert these born mendicants. who had never known how to earn an honest living, into selfsupporting, self-respecting men and women. He wished to make them understand that, the first wants supplied, they must depend on their own exertions for their subsistence. It was a necessary part of this education that no more should be gratuitously given them than was absolutely necessary to keep them from starving and freezing, that they should learn that comforts could only be obtained through work, that privation was the necessary penalty of a shiftless and improvident idleness. A little reflection on the nature of the materials the bishop has to deal with, and on the methods absolutely necessary to convert them from incorrigible beggars into industrious self-supporting men and women, will enable their American neighbors at Morris to understand that they have not been so cruelly dealt with as was imagined.38

In March, 1881, Mr. O'Brien reported to the New York Sun that there was then no sickness among the immigrants and that the men and women and children were doing well. And the Catholic Review begged its readers to remember that the faults of these poor people were chiefly due to the terrible tyranny from which they had only lately escaped, and that a little liberty and American life would develop their better qualities.³⁹

The last report we have from the "Connemaras" is that of Father Nugent in an address reported in the Liverpool Catholic Times. While speaking on emigration at the League Hall, Liverpool, shortly after his return from a trip to America, he told his audience that his protégés in Minnesota were happy and prosperous. As an illustration of their situation he adduced the fact that when he, Father Nugent, preached in the church at Graceville in September, 1881, between forty and fifty teams drove up to the church, carrying Connemara families. He declared that nowhere in prosperous County Meath could so many teams have appeared before one

³⁸ Catholic Review, January 8, 1881, (quoting from the Pioneer Press).
³⁹ Catholic Review, January 1, 1881.

church. He assured his audience that in general, at that time, the people were doing well.40

In this connection we ought to notice another Minnesota colony —that of Mr. John Sweetman—because the methods of its patron and the results achieved place it between Father Nugent's settlement and those of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association. In the first place, while the Connemara people were given their transportation and everything they needed for beginning life on the prairies and the early Sweetman colonists were conveyed, without charge, to the land and loaned enough for a start, the colonists of the Association paid their own way, though allowed the benefit of whatever reduction in railroad rates could be procured for them and given the land

⁴⁰ Dillon O'Brien died suddenly in February, 1882. His greatest services and his most intense interest lay in the field of Irish Catholic colonization, and his son, Judge O'Brien of St. Paul, insists that his Connemara experience hastened his death. His lifelong passion was devotion to the elevation of the Irish race. He labored for that end chiefly through advocacy of temperance and colonization. He inaugurated the Minnesota colonization convention of 1869, the first state convention held in colonization interests. Archbishop Ireland later took up the work and then fruits were manifest.—Catholic Universe, February 23, 1882, Onahan Scrapbook.

In 1869 he and Mr. Onahan worked hard to bring about and make success-

ful the St. Louis colonization convention. In 1870 and again in 1877 he lectured in New York and New England on the work so dear to his heart. On the former occasion he made the acquaintance of Rev. Stephen Byrne who also was an ardent promoter of Catholic colonization. The Dominican Fathers of New York gave him the use of their church for his colonization lectures and did much to further the cause he represented. In fact, throughout the Irish Catholic colonization movement for two decades this church and its

priests faithfully and warmly supported it.

Although no immediate effect resulted from Mr. O'Brien's tours of the East thousands were set to thinking seriously on the advantages of the West and thus the difficulties encountered by the movement of 1879 were lessened.

—Catholic Review, February 20, 1882 (Article by Father Byrne).

We have seen how instrumental Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Onahan were in

causing the Catholic Colonization Convention of Chicago in 1879.—Catholic

Review, February 20, 1882 (Article by Mr. Onahan).

He was unselfish in his labors, loyal to Catholic principles, ardently devoted to the people and the cause of Ireland—to everything that would elevate that race at home and abroad. "The work in which he was engaged required talent, enthusiasm, and patience. He gave it these and more. He was forcible, earnest, always impressive, frequently eloquent." In his private character he was above reproach. He was not rich. "Few men of his generous

at the low price it was possible to put on it because of the buying of great quantities from the railroad companies. Secondly, the patrons of the Connemaras, by their too great liberality, had fostered in them a spirit of dependence, and the Sweetman colonists had put nothing of their own into the land so there was little to hold them to it through the period of struggle; but the colonists of the Association began at once to make payments on their farms, bought or built their own little houses, and equipped themselves for their new life. Thirdly, and this distinction has already been noted, the first two groups came direct from Ireland, while the Associations's colonists were, for the most part, Irish-Americans. In all three cases the religious life of the settlers was provided for, they were located near enough together for agreeable social intercourse, and economically, all needed assistance was tendered them, but the only one of the three enterprises that was a pronounced success was the last.

The Sweetman Irish Colony has been treated fully and ably by Howard E. Egan in Mid-America, 41 and by Miss Alice E. Smith in Minnesota History, 42 so we shall content ourselves with allowing John Sweetman himself to tell the history of his colony as he told it through the Catholic Review in December, 1883.43

He introduces himself as one who "ought to know some useful facts connected with Catholic colonization, having devoted the last four years to an endeavor to start a Catholic colony on the prairies of the West. It is impossible for me to write poetically," he says,

unselfish character acquire or retain wealth. . . . He loved God, God's Church, and God's people—the poor."—Catholic Review, February 20, 1882,

⁽quoting Mr. Onahan).
"He was eager for the elevation of the people of his race, and devoted to their best interests. He was an ardent Irish-American—charming, droll, kindly,—who loved the land of his adoption yet never faltered in his devotion to the ancestral soil." Catholic Universe, February 23, 1882, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁴¹ October, 1929, pp. 133-166; January, 1930. ⁴² December, 1928, pp. 331-346. ⁴³ There is no allusion to this report in either Dr. Egan's or Miss Smith's article.

"but it strikes me that hard facts, not poetry, is what is required."
He continues:

In the early spring of the year 1881 the first settlers for the Sweetman Catholic Colony arrived in Murray County, Minnesota. I had devoted the previous summer to traveling over the United States and Canada, with the view of selecting the most desirable tract of land for my project, and concluded by purchasing about 20,000 acres in the above county. Today I can say with truth, that I am still of opinion that I selected the best locality, although I know that readers will naturally conclude, that, having invested so largely, I am not an unprejudiced witness in the matter. During the following winter I succeeded in starting a company, called the Irish American

Colonization Company Limited, to work my schemes.

The plan adopted was, in the first place, to select families of the laboring classes in Ireland, who had absolutely no money of their own, not sufficient even to put decent clothes on their backs; secondly, to pay their way from Ireland, where there was no demand for their labor, to the prairies of Minnesota, which were but awaiting intelligent and hardy workers to produce sufficient food to repay the husbandman; thirdly, to advance to them land and the necessary means of working the land, which included food for their families for one year; fourthly, to give none of this as alms, which would inevitably pauperize any human being, however high-minded, but to give it merely as a loan to be repaid by them before they received title to their land; we trusted for our security to the natural increase of value of prairie land, settled.

This scheme seemed plausible, yet it failed—failed most signally, as I showed in a pamphlet published last winter, entitled "Recent Experiences in the Emigration of Irish Families." It failed from the fact that a large percentage of the settlers left for the cities without giving the prairie a fair trial. Those that remained and worked hard are now making their payments without suffering very great hardships in comparison to those they suffered in the old country. I think I can say they are, on the contrary, enjoying material comforts which, although they now regard as mere necessaries they would have this time three years ago considered extravagant

luxuries.

Our company finding it impossible to continue the first plan of taking settlers without any capital of their own, now offers our lands to another class, namely to those who, being intelligent and industrious workers, can command, on their arrival on the land five hundred dollars or more.

The more money they have, the more they can work to advantage, the pleasanter home can they enjoy, the less hardship have they to suffer. I would not have any come West with the idea that they will find a paradise. . . . Much harm has been done to the colonization of the prairies by over-praise. Many people have come out, have necessarily failed, and returning to the East, have dissuaded others who had the necessary qualifications, from starting Westward.⁴⁴

Mr. Onahan calls Mr. John Sweetman a true benefactor in colonization work. He says that his colony turned out disastrously at first, but that in the long run it flourished,⁴⁵ and Bishop Ireland accounts for the failure in the beginning of the undertaking on the ground that the colonists had put nothing of their own into the venture.

They were not anchored to the land, and in presence of difficulty or temptation which might arise, there was no power to retain them in the colony. With the class of people Mr. Sweetman had in hand, distant results, however flattering, did not weigh in presence of the trials of today. The prairie, until people become used to it, appears lonely. For two years, a good support, at most, will be received from the land; while the city hard by offers attractive associations and ready cash at the end of a day's work, even if the work is hard, and will be during lifetime a ceaseless slavery. We must take men as they are, and make all due allowance for the motives swaying their minds.

He says that those who went to the colony in 1881 and 1882 and stayed did remarkably well and he commends the enterprise warmly. He maintains here as so often elsewhere that if emigration from Ireland had been directed in the past as Mr. Sweetman and others were striving to direct it in the early eighties the history of Irish emigration to the United States would have been a happier tale.

Judge O'Brien, in reviewing the history of the Minnesota colo-

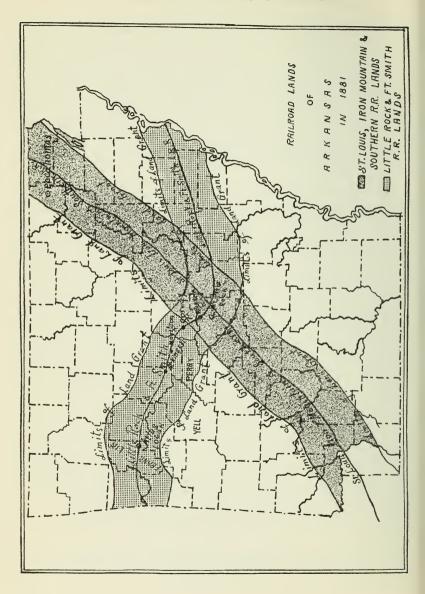
^{**}Catholic Review, December 29, 1883. (Letter of Sweetman.)
**Catholic Standard, December 1884. Clipping in Onahan Scrapbook.

nies, offered the following explanation of the partial failure of the Sweetman Colony and the Connemara settlement. It seemed to him that the change in the condition of these people was too sudden and too complete: they could not appreciate it or accommodate themselves to it. The conception was beautiful; the motive of those at the back of the enterprise pure and perfectly disinterested; but the colonists at first were not equal to it. They could not understand it; they could not co-operate with it. When trials and hardships came, as was inevitable, they lost heart or became distrustful in too many cases, and gave up.

The point to be emphasized is that in these two undertakings the initial failure is to be attributed mainly to two facts: The colonists had paid nothing for the land in the beginning and therefore they did not feel at the outset that it was theirs and that they would be actually giving up something by leaving it. In the second place, the entire group in each case had come directly from Ireland not of their own initiative, but, as it seemed to them, at the invitation of others, and naturally they felt that their coming was to redound in some way to the advantage of their protectors. On the other hand, the Irish Catholic Colonization Association was established primarily for Irish-Americans and its dealings with its colonists were on a strictly business basis. Thus the far-sighted wisdom of its founders insured its success.

The Arkansas venture was only a partial success. Just why this should have been it is somewhat difficult to determine. Agricultural conditions were good, work easily obtainable, the resources of the State varied, the railroads interested in colonization, Bishop Fitzgerald an ardent promoter of it, and the colonies already established a pronounced success. Bishop Spalding attributed the lack of any marked success with the Association's colony in this State to the presence of negro labor which made it difficult to induce the Irish to locate there.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Emerald Vindicator (Pittsburgh), Interview with Bishop Spalding, August 15, 1883. Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.



Arkansas was the scene of one of the earliest attempts at planting Catholic colonies in the West. Rt. Rev. Andrew Byrne, the first incumbent of the See of Little Rock (1844-66) was a warm advocate of colonization, and in 1849 endeavored to demonstrate its advantages in his State.⁴⁷ Although the results were disappointing, the wisdom of Bishop Byrne was vindicated under his successor, Bishop Edward Fitzgerald, by eminently successful colonies, founded principally along the line of the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad, west of Little Rock, and largely through the agency of the Road.⁴⁸

The first of these was located in Logan and Franklin Counties, in 1875, by the Benedictines from the Abbey of St. Meinrad in Indiana. Catholics came in such large numbers from the States and from Germany and Switzerland that in 1879 the monastery was raised to the rank of a Priory. There were in 1881 about 1000 contented German families settled there. Many who had come with only a few dollars had saved over \$2000. About 1200 of the colonists were Catholic and were organized in six communities, with three priests and several Brothers, five Sisters and two convents. Four of the settlements were provided with schools, and plans for schools in the other two were under way. 49

In 1878 the monastery of the Fathers of the Holy Ghost was made the center of an equally flourishing colony, known as St. Joseph's. It was situated at Morrilton, about thirty-five miles west of Little Rock and somewhat east of St. Benedict's. In 1881 it numbered about 2000 Catholics with seven churches and chapels, six priests and two convent schools.⁵⁰ The newer German colonies of

⁴⁷ Bishop Spalding gives as the reason for this failure the presence of slavery and the lack of proper organization, that caused dissatisfaction among the emigrants, many of whom went further north and took up land in Iowa, and also to the lack of railroad facilities at the time.—Religious Mission, p. 170. Father Stephen Byrne attributes it to poverty and the total absence of the favorable conditions of the eighties.—Catholic Review, August 6, 1881.

⁴⁸ Catholic Review, January 1, 1881; The Pilot, August 13, 1881. ⁴⁹ Catholic Review, November 20, 1881; December 3, 1881, (Bishop Fitz-

⁴⁹ Catholic Review, November 20, 1881; December 3, 1881, (Bishop Fitzerald).
⁵⁰ Catholic Review, January 1, 1881.

Mary's Help near Atlas, St. Boniface in Perry County, St. Vincent's north of Morrilton, a little colony at Atkins, one named Conway and one in Pocahontas in the northern part of the State on the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad promised to be prosperous.⁵¹

These settlements proved that the colonization in the Southwest of immigrants and poor people from the cities could be successful, and the fact that in 1881 several others, German, Polish and Italian, were developing satisfactorily led the Directors of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association to believe that Arkansas would be favorable also for Irish Catholic colonization.⁵² Accordingly, as was previously stated, investigations were made, encouraging reports returned, and negotiations opened with the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railway

⁶¹ Catholic Review, November 20, 1881; January 7, 1882.

Bishop Fitzgerald has given us a most interesting account of one of his experiences on a confirmation tour among the Arkansas colonies: The Bishop was met twenty miles off by a party of horsemen in gala dress; the firing of cannon, the ringing of bells, and the sweet music of a band announced his arrival at the town twenty miles from a railroad, and where three or four years back there was nothing but the traditional blacksmith shop and two saloons to denote that this was a town. A well-dressed and well-mannered body of people, Catholic and Protestant, assembled to greet me on arriving. The little church would do honor to many a country parish in our State of New York; the church music (Cecilian music) by the people was excellent; the pontifical ceremony, the reception of the bishop strictly carried out. Everything indicated a truly religious and pious people, contented and thankful to heaven for the prosperity with which they had been blessed.— Catholic Review, December 3, 1881.

the State seventy-five Italian families under Father Jarowski were engaged in the cultivation of the grape, silk, and other Italian production.—Catholic Review, January 1, 1881. Later (1898) Father Pietro Bandini founded a prosperous Italian settlement in Tontitown, Arkansas. He began with twenty-six families on 700 acres in the Ozarks. They bought the land in installments and in 1916 had a prosperous town with a population of 1000. They held 5000 acres valued at \$150.00 an acre and were organized under a city charter. Other settlements were made in the vicinity and even the original colony ceased to be distinctively Italian. It became in every respect American. In 1911 the Italian government had a gold medal struck for Father Bandini for his work for Italian immigrants.—Outlook, XIII, (1916) p. 1208.

Company for the control of the sale of lands in a "reservation" in Perry and Yell Counties.⁵³

The committee sent to "spy out" the land reported for the locality selected: a rich and fertile soil, which could be cleared with reasonable care and economy; comparative cheapness in price and satisfactory terms as to time for payment by colonists with low rate of interest; salubrity and healthfulness of locality with only the ordinary reservation as to a new country; a climate which admitted of outdoor work by the colonist almost the whole year.⁵⁴

In this instance the officers of the Association did not purchase the land and resell it, as in Nebraska and Minnesota, nor was the money paid to the railroad company through them as in Archbishop Ireland's colonies.⁵⁵ They merely obtained from the company favor-

⁵³ Catholic Review, August, 1881.

The price of land at that time in Arkansas varied from 50c to \$50.00 an acre according to location and intrinsic value. However, the Railroad held an immense amount of land for sale at from \$2.00 to \$6.00 an acre on six years time, and offered favorable terms to actual settlers. The climate and soil of the State were well suited to agriculture. Cotton and tobacco crops were excellent; Indian corn was successfully produced and a fair crop of wheat and the smaller grains could be raised. Moreover, lead, silver, iron and coal mines offered employment of that nature to such as desired it, and manufacturing was developing.—Catholic Review, January 1, 1881.

There was an abundance of lumber, and cattle-raising was profitable.— Catholic Review. August 20, 1881.

⁵⁴ Catholic Review, September 27, 1881.

That there was plenty of land that could have been procured at that time is attested by the report of the Land Commissioner for the year ending June 30, 1882: Sales of agricultural lands amounted to 698,091 acres in Dakota, 408,778 in Michigan, 370,032 in Louisiana, 360,307 in Minnesota, 349,339 in Wisconsin, 226,677 in Nebraska, and something less in many of the other States. Over 4,000,000 acres were disposed of under the various land acts during that year, more than 1,000,000 in Nebraska, Minnesota and Kansas. These, of course, could not have been handled by the Association, but the salable lands could have been, and many people preferred getting possession by purchase to being bound by conditions as were those who obtained them in other ways. Possibly, too, the Association could have prevented some of the absorption of lands by aliens. During the eighties a great amount of land was acquired by English individuals, and syndicates and land companies of other countries. The Washington Herald (1883) lists seven British holders of American land that were alluded to in a speech in the House of Lords. One of these holdings consisted of 2,000,000 acres of cattle land in Montana and

able terms for settlers and the right to determine who should locate in certain districts. This method of colonizing had as yet been untried by them and did not meet with their entire approval. It placed them more or less in the position of seeming to be agents of the railway companies, whereas in fact it was the only course possible if they were to continue the work they had set out to accomplish. With sufficient funds at their command they could have extended incalculable benefits to the poor through purchases of large tracts of cheap fertile lands that they could have held until there was demand for them. In all their operations they proved that their object was not to make money but just to give a fair return for the money loaned to their undertaking through the buying of shares. Therefore while other lands were appreciating in value theirs could have commanded a higher price, too, but their intention was not to raise the price. They would have held it on the original terms and given it to the poor for that.

Because of the great increase in immigration in 1881 the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railway reserved a large portion of its lands for another projected German colony. These lands were situated in Perry County in the immediate vicinity of the 35,000 acres to be devoted to colonization purposes by the Irish Catholic Colonization Association. The terms of sale were as follows:

Four dollars per acre, one-fourth down and the rest in installments at the end of two, four, six years. If the purchaser preferred,

The Monitor in 1885 lists these and many more amounting in all to 20,647,000 acres, most of which were in the hands of the British. And an Association whose sole purpose was to benefit America and Americans could

not raise \$100,000 wherewith to do it!

Dakota, another of 1,300,000 acres of pine land in Mississippi and agricultural land in the Yazoo River Bottoms. 350,000 acres of most desirable land in Kansas was divided up into 400 farms for English and Scotch immigrants. 500,000 acres in Nebraska and Colorado, 100,000 acres for colonizing purposes on the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad, "Dunraven Park" of 100,000 acres of cattle land in Colorado, and 400,000 acres in the Texas Pan-handle, besides many other one or two thousand acre tracts in Colorado, Texas, Dakota, and New Mexico were held by Englishmen.—Clippings, Onahan Scrapbook.

he might extend his payments over ten years, paying one-tenth of the purchase money each year and 6% interest on the remainder. A reduction of 10% was made if the whole purchase price were paid at once.⁵⁶

The land selected by the Association for St. Patrick's Colony was sold at from \$2.00 to \$6.00 an acre on eight years' time or longer, if desired, with a discount granted for cash.⁵⁷ This land, according to Bishop Fitzgerald, was even better than that in the Benedictine colony that had prospered so conspicuously. The climate and agricultural conditions were the same. All that was needed to make it successful, declared the Bishop, was

. . . the same thrift, enterprise, energy, and intelligence as shown by the Germans. I do not say to anyone, "Come," but I do say that if the English-speaking Catholics will come and organize themselves in settlements with their church and school, their priest and teachers as their German brethren, and bring the same push, pluck and patience to bear, they must succeed. For the soil is there and the climate is there, for the one as for the other.⁵⁸

When Bishop Spalding visited Arkansas he was especially pleased with the degree of success that had been attained by these settlements to which Bishop Fitzgerald refers and the method adopted there of grouping families about a community of religious priests appealed to him strongly. Consequently he and Bishop Fitzgerald endeavored to secure the Dominicans for Arkansas, but were unsuccessful in this.⁵⁹

The priest engaged by them for the opening of the colony was Rev. Thomas J. Keelan who in December, 1881, made a tour of the

⁶⁶ Catholic Review, November 20, 1881.

⁶⁷ Report of the Association, May, 1882, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁵⁸ Catholic Review, December 3, 1881.

⁶⁹ At that time the Order was enforcing the rule which required that their establishments be large enough to be strictly monastic, and as they could not spare so many priests for colonization purposes in Arkansas even if they could have been used the bishops were obliged to look elsewhere.—Catholic Review, August 20, 1881.

lands intended for the colony. He found that much of the territory was already settled, but that some of the best, especially that at some distance from the public road, was still unoccupied. One place particularly, that known as the Petit-Jean Valley, he thought would be most satisfactory for the location of the colony. There was sufficient upland to afford dwelling places and a living, while the bottoms were very fertile. It was only four miles distant from a good market for cotton and the road thither was level except for one hill. Another narrower valley south of the Petit-Jean he considered equally good except for a possible exposure to waste in time of heavy rains.60

It was to this place the colonists were directed and in 1882 Father Keelan was able to report that many families from Kentucky, Missouri, and Pennsylvania had come and that many more were. expected in the fall.61 The floods and devastation resulting from the overflow of the Mississippi in March, 1882, did not injure the colony, which was too far west, nor did it suffer from the heavy rains of that spring.62 Nevertheless it is probable that reports of the flood frightened and deterred many from seeking to make a home in the State.

Shortly after the publication of the plans for Arkansas some groups arrived direct from Ireland, found employment at once and were soon comfortably settled.63

In September, 1882, Bishop Fitzgerald sent to the Catholic Review a communication embodying answers to the many letters of inquiry respecting St. Patrick's Colony that were being addressed to him. He repeated what had been stated many times: namely, that the climate left nothing to be desired, the soil was rich and of great variety, producing cotton, corn and tobacco exceptionally well, that marketing facilities were good, that railroad land sold for \$4.00 an

⁶⁰ Catholic Review, January 7, 1882 (Report to Bishop Fitzgerald). ⁶¹ Report of the Association, May, 1882, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁶² Catholic Review, May 25, 1882. (Report of Mr. Onahan.) 63 Catholic Review, July 30, 1881.

acre on four to ten years' credit, that it was too early to pronounce upon the success of the colony, but that the prospects were encouraging.64 Four months later he spoke of the immense land sales of the preceding months to speculators, lumberers, colonizing companies and individuals, and the consequent rise in the price of the land. Twenty-five dollars an acre was then being asked for tracts that four years previously had "no price," and before long the price everywhere would have advanced so high as to be out of the reach of poor men 65

Efforts were made by Bishop Fitzgerald and Bishop Spalding to fill up St. Patrick's Colony, but comparatively few of the desired settlers came. One reason for this lack of response may have beer. the fact that dealings were to be directly with the railroad company. and people were not generally inclined to repose much confidence in them. Had the Directors been able to carry out their plans as seemed best to them and buy land outright as in Nebraska and Minnesota it is probable that the colony of Arkansas would have shared the success of those of the more northern States. As it was, when the Association's lease on the land expired, it withdrew from direct co-operation with the work of the settlement of Arkansas.66

⁶⁴ Catholic Review, September 9, 1881. 85 Catholic Review, January 13, 1883. (Bishop Fitzgerald.) 86 Emerald Vindicator, August 15, 1883, Onahan Scrapbook.

NEBRASKA, 1880

Chapter VI

O'CONNOR AND GREELEY CENTER, NEBRASKA

The Nebraska Colony was founded in accordance with the plans and ideas originally conceived by the Colonization Association, and it furnishes today an outstanding illustration of the possibilities of Irish Catholic colonization in the western states of the Union in the 'eighties of the last century.

The history of the Catholic Church in Nebraska has not yet been written, but for the beginnings of Catholicity in the State, one who has devoted much time to the study of that field would have us go back to 1542 and Father Juan de Padilla's missionary labors among the Nebraska Indians.¹

However, except for the passage of fur-trading expeditions through the State there seem to have been no white settlers there until after the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory by the United States, and the subsequent expedition of Lewis and Clarke.² The maps and accounts brought back by these explorers resulted in the establishment in 1819 of Fort Atkinson.³ The Sixth United States

¹ Shine, "The Lost Province of Quivira," Catholic Historical Review, 11, (1916) p. 18 ff.

² The La Verendrye expedition, as indicated by the "La Verendrye plates," probably spent the winter of 1742-43 near the present location of Sidney in western Nebraska.—*True Voice*, Jubilee edition, December 7, 1928.

³ The old Fort Atkinson was near the present site of Calhoun, Neb.

Monsignor Shine of the Nebraska Historical Society spent many years collecting materials for such a history, but death overtook him before the work was compiled. He places Quivira in Nebraska and so traces Coronado's march in search of the Seven Cities of Cibola through that state. Father Juan de Padilla, Coronado's chaplain, returned the next year to Nebraska, the Monsignor tells us, and after some months of missionary labors among the Indians, met death there at their hands. David Donoghue of Fort Worth, Texas, in an article that appeared in the Southwest Historical Quarterly, January, 1929, locates Quivira in the Texan Panhandle; J. H. Simpson in 1869 traced the journey of the Spanish Conquistador into Southeastern Nebraska, while G. P. Winship in 1896 concluded that his line of march had been directed southward into Texas before the Nebraska line was reached.—Cf. Mid-America, October, 1929, p. 166 ff.; Rev. S. K. Wilson, S. J., a recognized authority in American history, also declines to accept Msgr. Shine's conclusions.

Infantry from Plattsburg, New York, which was Catholic almost to a man, occupied the fort until 1827 when it was evacuated.4

There is record of Father De Smet's crossing into Nebraska from his Pottawatomie Indian mission near Council Bluffs about 1840, but the settlement of the territory by white people really dates from the extinction of the Indian title in 1854.5 According to Father De Smet, on August 1, 1854, there was not a town or village of whites in the whole Nebraska territory.6 That year the Indians were removed to Kansas, and Nebraska was thrown open to settlement. By December there were thirty or forty sites laid out. In the summer of 1855 Father William Emonds of Iowa City, Iowa, crossed the river, and the following year he made arrangements for the erection of a church in Omaha. It was either in 1855 or 18567 that Rev. Jeremiah Tracey led a party of sixty Irish Catholics from Garry Owen, Iowa, through Fort Dodge and Sioux City to Dakota County in northeastern Nebraska, where he established St. Patrick's Settlement, later known as St. John's, and later still as Jackson. One of the first actual settlements in Nebraska therefore was made by a group of Irish Catholics.8

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the territory out of which Nebraska was formed was exercised successively from Quebec (1670-1776), from Spain through bishops appointed to New Orleans (1776-1803), by the Archbishop of Baltimore as administrator of the See of New Orleans (1803-1815), the American Bishop of New

⁴ True Voice, December 7, 1928.

[&]quot;Ibid.

[&]quot;Unpublished MSS., Msgr. Shine's Papers.

⁷ True Voice, December 7, 1928, gives the year 1855; Msgr. Shine in unpublished notes gives 1856.

⁸ Mr. Sheldon of the Nebraska State Historical Society, although he tells us that for a hundred years or more French traders and trappers had roamed over the region and that when the territory was opened to white settlers there were already small French colonies at Rulo, at Bellevue, and along the Missouri and Niobrara Rivers, adds that these were closely associated with the Indians. "The genuine French settlers came in the late fifties and for ten or fifteen years thereafter."—Sheldon, Nebraska History and Record of Pioneer Days, November, 1918, vol. I, no. 7, p. 2.

Orleans (1815-1827), the Bishop of St. Louis (1827-1850), the Vicar-Apostolic of the Rocky Mountains (1850-1859), the Vicar-Apostolic of Nebraska (1859-1885), and the Bishop of Omaha (1885 - —). In 1854, therefore, Nebraska belonged to the Rocky Mountain Vicariate. The administrator of this immense territory was Bishop Miege, a Jesuit, who made his headquarters among the Pottawatomie Indians in what is now known as St. Mary's, Kansas. Of the 5000 Catholics under his jurisdiction about 3000 were Indians. The whites were trappers and fur traders scattered throughout the district.10

The first permanent missions of Nebraska were established by the Benedictine Fathers who had founded an Abbey at Doniphon, Kansas, in 1856, and who thereafter visited the Nebraska towns regularly. Father A. Wirth, the prior and founder of the Abbey, attended Nebraska City and Omaha. In 1858 this charge was handed over to Rev. Francis Cannon.11

In 1859, at the request of Bishop Miege, the Vicariate of Nebraska was erected. Rt. Rev. James O'Gorman, a Trappist of New Melleray near Dubuque, Iowa, was consecrated its first bishop, and made his residence in Omaha.12 He found only three priests in his vast vicariate (357,000 square miles) which included the present state of Wyoming, Montana east of the Rockies, and Dakota west

⁹ Unpublished MSS., Msgr. Shine's Papers. The Rocky Mountain Vicariate included Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota west

of the Missouri, Montana, Wyoming, part of Colorado, and Oklahoma.

¹⁰ Bishop Miege visited Nebraska three times between 1850 and 1859. After the first visit he requested Father Tracey to do what he could for Omaha; on the second he became acquainted with the Creighton family and promised to obtain for Nebraska a resident Vicar Apostolic; on the third he was offered by Col. Sarpy a large block of land in Bellevue on condition that he build a church there at once. As there were no Catholics in the place he declined the offer.—True Voice, December 7, 1928.

"Unpublished MSS., Msgr. Shine's Papers.

¹² Bishop O'Gorman was consecrated without a residence See. At his arrival the city of Omaha offered him forty-two lots if he would locate there, but he declined the gift because he believed there was too much grass in the streets for a bishopric. However, after inspecting other sites he returned to Omaha and fixed his See there.—*Ibid*.

of the Missouri.¹³ Father Tracey of St. Patrick's settlement attended Fort Randall and the settlements of the Upper Missouri,¹⁴ Father Cannon attended Omaha, Nebraska City and settlements on the Platte River, and a Jesuit Father resided among the Indian tribes.¹⁵ A few weeks after his arrival in Omaha Bishop O'Gorman ordained William Kelly, a Christian Brother from Ireland, and installed him as pastor of St. Mary's Cathedral in Omaha. From there he attended Elkhorn and other missions of eastern Nebraska.¹⁶

From these three centers therefore, Omaha, Nebraska City, and Jackson, radiated the Nebraska Catholic missions, which increased so rapidly that statistics of 1861 list eight priests, eight stations, two churches completed and four in the building, one student for the priesthood, and seven thousand Catholics, including Indians.¹⁷

No Catholic Directories were issued in 1862 and 1863 because of the disturbed condition of the country, but we know that missions grew rapidly and priests continued to enter the field, because in

¹³ True Voice, December 7, 1928.

There were as yet no stations at Columbus, Fremont, Cummins City, and Dakota because of lack of priests and the scattered manner in which Catholics had located themselves in those districts.

¹⁵ Unpublished MSS., Msgr. Shine's Papers.

¹⁶ Directory of 1860, among Msgr. Shine's Papers. Father James Ryan, ordained by Bishop O'Gorman in 1861, was the "chaplain" of the Union Pacific Railroad during the period of its construction, and was "the chief force in the preservation of order in the camps." His powerful frame and strong-arm methods made him feared and respected in every camp, and woe betide the ring-leaders in any disturbance if Father Ryan could be rushed to the scene of battle. He finally settled down at Columbus from where he attended all points on the railroad west to Utah. It is told of him that he strenuously opposed the appointment of a pastor for Cheyenne, 400 miles west, on the grounds that it would ruin his parish.—True Voice, December 7, 1928.

¹⁷ (1) In 1928 there were 670 priests and the Catholic population numbered 300,000.

⁽²⁾ The first German priest of Nebraska, Rev. Ferdinand Lechleiter, was ordained in 1865 and spent his first winter in the West at Fort Randall on the Missouri River ministering to the soldiers and Indians. Then he was stationed at Crete, from where he visited all the territory west to Colorado and south to Kansas, doing most of his traveling on foot with a pack on his back. He is responsible for the building of forty churches—small wooden temporary structures—in his district.—Unpublished MSS.

1870 the Vicariate of Nebraska could count twenty-one priests, twenty churches, forty-five stations, and two convents, 18 and in 1874, when Bishop O'Gorman died, the number of stations had increased to fifty-six and convents to three.19

The history of these missions and pioneer priests would furnish a valuable contribution to the story of the upbuilding of the West. It is a great pity that so often records and other documents relating to the early struggles of pioneer parishes have been lost or destroyed, and that one generation in raising the superstructure of prosperous community life can be allowed to forget the valiant men and women who braved hardship and danger and discouragement to lay the foundation 20

The pioneer priests of early Nebraska were men of strong character and indomitable will. In the face of many discouragements they went forward, and built better than they knew. The early settlers of Nebraska were, for the most part, poor. With them their priests endured hardships and privations and the ordinary conditions of existence. In times of crop failure and during the grasshopper visitation of the 'seventies they literally starved with their people.

They have left a heritage of vigorous faith in this section that is full of promise for the future. Religion in Nebraska today is flourishing. Seventy years ago it was a puny plant in the wilderness. The growth and prosperity today is due to a large extent to the labors and sacrifices of our pioneer priests.21

¹⁸ Unpublished MSS., Msgr. Shine's Papers.

¹⁹ True Voice, December 7, 1928.
²⁰ In some of the isolated western missions, e.g., Mackinaw, Indian runners would announce the arrival of a priest, and families would come flocking in from all points of the surrounding wilderness, sometimes from a distance of 1000 miles.—Thwaites, Address: "At the Meeting of the Trials; the Romance of a Parish Register," (reviewed in the World Herald, May 9, 1913), Msgr. Shine's Papers.

In these days of swift comfortable transportation we are unable to appreciate, or to understand, or even to imagine what hardship was entailed in these visits of people to their priests and priests to their people—the living faith that prompted them to undertake the journey and the stout hearts that enabled them to accomplish it. Many a "Romance of a Parish Register" could and should be written before the records and traditions of pioneer days have been consigned to oblivion.

²¹ True Voice, December 7, 1928.

It is due also to Bishop O'Gorman's successor, Bishop O'Connor, and his co-laborers in the field of Irish Catholic colonization in the West; and if Bishop Spalding made the Colonization Association possible in the days of its inception and successful in the years of its operation, the Nebraska colonies founded by that Association must grant him a share of the honor accorded the Bishop of Omaha for the great work accomplished for them, and through them for Nebraska and the Catholic Church.22

The first distinctive work of Bishop O'Connor was to secure the Jesuits of the Missouri Province to take over Creighton College that had been built in 1877, and his second to promote the cause of Irish Catholic Colonization in Nebraska.

The Irish Catholic colonization movement in which Bishop O'Connor was interested was inaugurated in 1879, and the fact that the population of Nebraska was more than doubled between that year and 1800 and thereafter until 1010 remained practically stationary.23 proves that those who in 1879 and 1880 urged prompt action in the placing of colonies were right in declaring that soon it would be too late.

As has been stated, an Irish Catholic colony was established in northeastern Nebraska in the 'fifties by Father Tracey. About twenty years later General John O'Neill, after leading two unsuccessful Fenian invasions of Canada in 1866 and 1870, turned his attention to Irish Catholic colonization in Nebraska. In 1872 he commenced a tour of the western States with a view to selecting suitable places

²² Rt. Rev. James O'Connor, the second Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska, was consecrated in 1876. In 1885 he was made the first bishop of Omaha, his See including Nebraska and the territory of Wyoming, with 81 priests, 200 religious, 25 clerical students, 64 parishes, 147 missions with church and 68 without, 12 chapels, 2 monasteries, 2 convents, 3 hospitals, 1 orphanage, 7 academies, I college, 22 parochial schools, and a Catholic population of 58,395. -Msgr. Shine's Papers.

The population was estimated by Bishop O'Connor at not far from 75,000. Msgr. Shine's Papers.

²² U. S. Census Reports: 1880, 452,402; 1890, 1,058,910; 1900, 1,066,300; 1910, 1,192,217.

for locating colonies. After two years of travel through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, and Nebraska he concluded that the last-named State offered the greatest advantages to settlers. Its chief attractions, he noted, were its location, situated as it is centrally between the two extremes of temperature, its healthful climate, pure water, and peculiarly fine land.

Nebraska at that time was but sparsely populated, with millions of acres of free government land and other millions of cheap railroad and speculation land awaiting settlers. O'Neill was convinced that thousands of Irish who were living then in cellars and garrets and tenement houses of large cities on the pittance they received for the hard labor of the mine and the workshop could better their condition materially and spiritually by taking up western lands, so he determined to do what lay within his power to "build up a young Ireland on the virgin prairies of Nebraska and there rear a monument more lasting than granite or marble to the Irish race in America." ²⁴

Accordingly he began to organize a colony for Holt County, but at first he found that very little interest was manifested in the project. Nevertheless he succeeded in locating his first colony at O'Neill in 1874. In 1875 a second colony of about a dozen men, some with families, followed; in 1876, the largest group, 102 men and a few women and children, arrived, and in 1877 the colony received an acquisition of seventy-one men, a few of whom brought their families.²⁵

The first colonists did not begin the building of the town. They secured a location and constructed a sod house, 36×18 , ²⁶ but by 1879 school was being taught in the temporary Catholic church building, 18×36 , in 1881 a new church, 40×80 , to cost about \$6000,

²⁴ Letter of John O'Neill to Bishop O'Connor, December 27, 1876. Onahan Scrapbook.

²⁶ Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, p. 984.
²⁶ Having ascertained from a map the location of suitable timber for a roof to their dwelling, they set out toward it with a load of willows. These, planted at intervals along the way, served to lead them back to their camping place.

was in process of erection, and in 1890 another, 44 x 100.²⁷ By 1882 the town of O'Neill, which proved to be the center of a fine grain and stock-raising country, had become the county seat.²⁸

The colony was not exclusively Catholic. Although Presbyterians and Methodists had no church buildings at first, their number was sufficiently large to cause them to engage the court-house for their religious services. In 1891 both had churches of their own.²⁹ However, there is no doubting the nationality and religion of those who formed the nucleus of the town, and the personnel continued to be largely Irish.³⁰

²⁷ Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska*, p. 985; Heading of a letter of Neil Brennan of O'Neill to T. J. Majors, January 28, 1891, loaned by the family of Gov. Majors.

²⁸ Andreas, op. cit., p. 984.

²⁹ Andreas, op. cit., p. 985; Letter of Neil Brennan, January 28, 1891. "Forty years ago the county treasurer's funds of Holt County were safely kept in the only safety vault and bank combined in the county: a cottonwood board two feet four inches long, in which to keep the cash. This board was part of the sheeting of a shingle roof dwelling house."—Sheldon, op. cit., p. 4.

^{30 (1)} Those brought by General O'Neill were: Brennan, Hughes, O'Connor, Curry, Connoley, McGrath, Hynes, Dempsey, Kelly, Sullivan, Cain, Cary, McKearney, Hayes, Ryan, Reddy, Hagerty, O'Neill, Cantlan, Costello, O'Sullivan, Sullivan, with an Alworth and a Strasburg.—Andreas, op. cit., p. 1984.

(2) Mr. Sheldon of the Historical Society attended a political convention

⁽²⁾ Mr. Sheldon of the Historical Society attended a political convention in this town some thirty years ago at the time of the formation of the Farmer's Alliance in Nebraska, and he declares that he listened to more

genuine oratory on that occasion than ever before or since.

⁽³⁾ Among the letters of T. F. Majors, Governor of Nebraska in 1891, is an interesting one from Neil Brennan of O'Neill, already cited. The letter head has an American flag in the upper left hand corner and beside this is a brief history of the town. From this sketch we learn that the population then was nearly 2000 and that the town contained many beautiful residences, several elegant brick blocks, a \$20,000 courthouse, a \$16,000 public school (both of brick), three good church buildings, and that an academy was being erected at a cost of \$20,000, to be opened February I, 1891.—Papers in the family of Hon. T. J. Majors.

Little of the letter itself has been preserved, but the concluding lines are significant. Mr. Brennan had evidently been petitioning for arms, perhaps for a demonstration of some kind, because he promised to return them "when called for or if wanted will go with the arms to defend the State or nation." Scores of letters were received by the governor at the same time but there is a remarkable sameness in the contents of the others, which are, almost without exception, appeals for help, especially in the way of railroad passes, because of the failure of the crops. There is no letter of this kind either from O'Neill or the Greeley colony.

In 1876 General O'Neill wrote to Bishop O'Connor of Nebraska giving him a brief account of his labors in the field of Irish Catholic colonization and submitting two plans for which he asked the Bishop's endorsement. In his letter he stated that he believed there had never been a better time for carrying out a project of colonization—free lands and cheap lands and tens of thousands of people idle all over the country—and that, with the aid of the Bishop's influence half a dozen colonies of Irish people could be located in Nebraska within the next five months.

Although he acknowledged that the general stagnation of industry had much to do with the interest evinced at that time in colonization he claimed for himself some share of the credit for having directed public attention to it, and for having actually organized and located a colony in the West. However, he continued, without means of his own, or the support of an organization, it was impossible to do much. He had neither; therefore it was that he had drawn up his tentative plans for organization of a colonization company, and asked for them Bishop O'Connor's sanction.

PLAN I.

- a. Let a Town-site Company be formed of men of means, to select a suitable place for locating a colony in one of the new counties of the State or in unorganized territory where there is nothing but Government land, and but few, if any, settlers. The Company can locate a town-site of 320 acres of land or Soldier's Additional Eighties, if they can be had, or in any other legal way.
- b. Have the site surveyed and platted and the plat recorded, and divide the lots as follows: one-fourth amongst the members of the company; one-fourth amongst those who would settle within a limited number of miles of the town-site within a stipulated number of years; one-fourth to be sold by settlers or a committee appointed by them, for the benefit of such as may need assistance in getting a start on their farms; one-eighth to be sold for the building of a church and the support of a priest and one-eighth to be sold by the Town-site Company for the cause of Irish freedom.

PLAN II.

A Town-site Company to be formed as suggested in Plan I. Let the Company make the necessary arrangements with the Land Commissioners of the Union Pacific Railroad and the Burlington and Missouri Railroad or either of them, to give the control of a certain tract of land which they (the Town-site Company) shall select along the line of the roads named, where none of the land has been sold, and where but little, if any, of the land of the alternate sections belonging to the government has been taken up.

The Town-site Company alone should have the privilege of selling this land—say for three or four years—at a price a little in advance of that charged by the railroad company, so as to realize enough money out of it to support a general office in Omaha. . . . The Company should locate a town site and divide it as suggested in Plan I, purchasing the land for the town site from the railroad company.³¹

Bishop O'Connor had come West from a congested district of Pennsylvania where he had long been familiar with the terrible conditions under which the people were struggling for existence and where he had conceived the idea of transplanting the Irish to the western lands where there would be room, and plenty, and hope for the future. He did not believe his dream would be realized in his day but he did what he could to encourage General O'Neill in his work and entered into the colonization venture of 1879 when it was launched. In his reply to O'Neill, January 13, 1877, he endorsed the General's estimate of Nebraska as a place of settlement for industrious farmers of limited means, and expressed his approbation of the second plan in particular because of its providing for settlement near a railroad. This would give the company owning the road an interest in the development of the colony, which of course would be productive of the best results to the settlers. He added that he would take a special interest in the spiritual welfare of every colony that should be established in his jurisdiction and that he would send

³¹ Letter, Onahan Scrapbook.

priests to visit them at stated times until they should be able to support resident pastors.32

In February, 1877, O'Neill published a circular in which was printed a copy of his letter to Bishop O'Connor and the Bishop's answer, also a statement of A. W. Hubbard, president of the Covington, Columbus, and Black Hills Railroad Company, containing information on the route of the road then under construction, and a letter from O'Neill himself to the public, in which he promised to select suitable sites for colonies along the Union Pacific, the Burlington, and Missouri, and the proposed C. C. and B. H. Railway lines, and to publish a pamphlet of instruction for intending immigrants. This he enclosed in another circular which he sent from his headquarters in Philadelphia to each member of the Nebraska State Legislature. In the latter he stated that during the previous three years he had lectured in at least one hundred cities and towns on Irish immigration to the West, dwelling particularly on the soil, climate, and other natural advantages of Nebraska, that he had been instrumental in locating two colonies in Holt County, Nebraska, and had sent several hundred persons to other parts of the State, and that although he was particularly interested in the Irish people, his information and assistance had been furnished free to all. He concluded by asking that some compensation be given him for his services to Nebraska since he had used all his personal resources in the work of building up the State and was at that time considerably in debt because of it.33

Whether or not the request met with the hoped-for response has not been ascertained, but certainly General O'Neill through his colonies contributed his share toward the almost phenomenal development of the agricultural resources of the State. That that development was most remarkable is borne witness to by Mr. Sheldon:

Out of a total population of 1,300,000 in 1918, 700,000 were

³² Onahan Scrapbook.
33 Circular in Onahan Scrapbook.

actually living upon farms and practically all the remainder in a direct way dependent upon farming. Now the evolution of farming in Nebraska during the lifetime of the writer exhibits one of the most extraordinary and fascinating panoramas of human progress. At one end is the ox-team and the buffalo-Indian; at the other end is the automobile, self-binder and farm tractor. The annual production of wealth in Nebraska measured in dollars, has increased during that period about 300-fold. The chapter of our history which deals with this revolution alone is one whose facts dare the imagination. The social changes growing out of this production furnish another chapter of our agricultural history. During all these years there has been a series of agitations and organizations of farmers in Nebraska looking toward economic and political reconstruction. Any student of Nebraska history perceives at once that the results of these farmers' movements, wise or foolish, good or bad, form the central body of our history and must be the foundation for most of what shall follow in Nebraska during the next half century.34

In the meantime Greeley County had been developing. The soil was and still is remarkably fertile and easy to work, while the proximity to the grazing regions of the sand-hills where cattle could be raised and fattened at the sole expense of herding, made it peculiarly desirable for farming purposes. There was an abundance of literature published in the 'seventies and 'eighties on the advantages and resources of Nebraska. Numerous newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets told the history of the latent wealth of her prairies, of her health-giving climate, her water-resources, and her facilities for stock-raising.³⁵

³⁴ Sheldon, op. cit., p. I.
³⁵ In 1875 Edwin A. Curley, special commissioner from The Field, a
London newspaper, to the emigrant field of America, published a book of 474
pages on Nebraska, Its Advantages, Resources and Drawbacks (Chiswick
press in Chancery Lane, London), and no State has received more eulogistic
treatment perhaps than has this at the hands of Mr. L. D. Burch of the New
York Tribune, in his Nebraska as It Is. Mr. Burch had devoted nearly a year
to careful observation of the State, so he doubtless knew whereof he spoke
when he declared its soil to be richer than that of any other Middle Western
State, its climate very nearly perfect, its productiveness of wheat, corn, oats,
fruits, and garden stuffs unequalled, and its facilities for raising stock
unrivalled.—Burch, Nebraska as It Is. (quoted in Pamphlet, Irish Catholic
Colonization Association of the United States, Greeley County.)

All that was said and written of Nebraska the State seems to have been true in a superlative degree of Greeley County. Its Loess deposit was as fine as any in the State ³⁶ and its climate made the section a paradise for invalids.³⁷

In 1871 a settlement of Seventh Day Baptists from Wisconsin was made in what is now Scotia, Greeley County,³⁸ and in 1872 and 1873 important settlements were founded in Valley County and in southwestern Greeley County.³⁹ In the fall of 1872 these few

As one goes west one finds less clay in the soil and more sand. In Greeley County the land is good and is easily worked. One can work it two hours after a rain; it is much better in that way than the soil of Iowa or Illinois. In those states there is "gumbo" or "hard pan" that renders the soil useless in excessively rainy or dry seasons, though, of course, when worked at the right time, and under proper conditions, it is very fine. In Greeley County one

can work more land with the same amount of labor.

The cheapest fertilizers, producing nitrogenous bacteria, as they do, are alfalfa and sweet clover. When fed, these provide the balance ration of the oily substance of the corn that otherwise would waste in the feeding. Sweet clover was introduced in Nebraska at first as a weed; now it is put in with the oats and turned down in the spring. So one has fertilizer for nothing and a good crop. If left standing the stalk of the alfalfa is better than that of the clover, that is, better for eating, but goes down deeper into the ground.

There is no lime in the valley, but there is on the hills of Wheeler County, north of Greeley County, where the Germans have raised excellent corn crops but which are best used for stock. Grazing land there can still be obtained for as little as \$10 an acre and the herds left out all winter.—Interview, Father

Galvin, pastor of Spalding, Nebr.

³⁷ Among the 65 families settled in and around O'Connor between 1877 and 1880 the attending priest had not one sick call.—Pamphlet issued by the Irish Catholic Colonization Association, in 1880, p. 13, Onahan Scrapbook.

One man who went there on a "health-chase" in 1880 died only a few

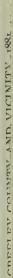
months ago, 1931, (Mr. T. P. Lanigan of Greeley Center).

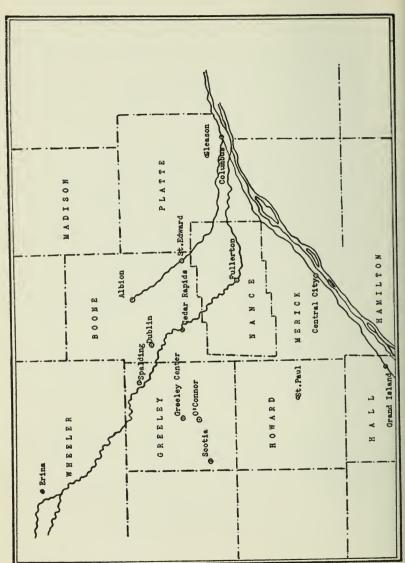
³⁸ They migrated in order to find a place where their observance of the Sabbath would be convenient.

deposit to a depth of from five to two hundred feet. It is practically inexhaustible. Owing to the remarkably fine comminated silica of which the bulk of the deposit consists, it possesses natural drainage in the highest degree, absorbing water like a huge sponge, and in time of drought sending up moisture from its greatest depths by capillary attraction, for the needs of vegetation. This is why, over all the region where the deposits prevail, the natural vegetation and cultivated crops are rarely dried or drowned out."—

Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the U. S., Greeley County, (quoting Professor Aughey, quoted by Burch in Nebraska as It Is).

³⁹ Andreas, op. cit., p. 927.





citizens of Greeley County took steps toward organization and held an election of county officers. Thirteen votes were cast to elect ten officers: three Commissioners, a Clerk, Treasurer, Sheriff, Judge, Surveyor, Superintendent of Schools, and Coroner. An election of 1874 fixed the county seat at Scotia. Another county-seat election was held in 1881. The principal contestants were Scotia and O'Connor. The former received 171 votes, the latter, 196, so since a twothirds majority vote was required for its removal, it remained for the time in Scotia, although that town in 1882 was still small, possessing a population of less than 100.40

Meanwhile a group of Catholics had settled in the northeastern part of the county in what was known as "Halifax". Michael J. Sullivan had gone to Nebraska from Wisconsin in 1872 seeking health. A summer spent at Schuyler impressed him so favorably with the country that when he returned to it in 1874 he led out five others, Timothy Cronin, Margaret Sullivan, and three Germans, John Schlaum, Joe Grim and Adam Weis.41 Others followed and although hardships and dangers were many, by 1878 Halifax had become quite a thriving farming community.42

Early in April, 1877, General O'Neill located in Greeley County on the plan approved by Bishop O'Connor, a colony of about twentyfive Pennsylvania families; and in late April, Patrick Hynes, one of the settlers and at the same time, the agent of O'Neill, sent to the Pittston Gazette an enthusiastic letter that set forth the conditions of the colony—the fertility of the soil and the general prospects of prosperity.43 A circular on this colony sent from O'Neill's headquarters in May announced that the new colony had been named O'Con-

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 928.

[&]quot;Interview, March, 1929, John H. Sullivan of Spalding; Spalding Enter-prise, May 31, 1923 and Spalding Grit, April 9, 1898, Sisters' Scrapbook. From that time to the present the personnel of the settlement has remained approximately half German and half Irish.

⁴² Spalding Grit, April 9, 1898, Sisters' Scrapbook. (Spalding.)

⁴³ Undated clipping, Onahan Scrabbook,

nor, although there was no prospect of the erection of any building on the townsite for some time to come.⁴⁴

Therefore, when in 1879 the Irish Catholic Colonization Association was organized, Bishop O'Connor, with these two pioneer Catholic communities in mind, was prepared to offer to secure land in Nebraska, and could promise, with reasonable certainty, that a colony located there would be successful. In the first place, the men of the families in O'Connor and Halifax had had some experience of Nebraska farming and were disinterested in their offers of assistance to new-comers. Secondly, there were quantities of excellent railroad land in and around Greeley County that could be procured at a very low rate, especially when bought in large quantities.

Every alternate section of land in Greeley, Valley, Boone and Sherman Counties and a large portion of the lands in Howard, Antelope, Madison, Platte, Pierce, Wayne, Stanton, Dixon and Dakota Counties were owned by the B. & M. railroad because much of this line had been laid through the twenty-mile limit of the U. P. railroad land to which the B. & M. could lay no claim. Consequently the latter company was given other territory. In 1877 there was practically no good unoccupied land for homesteads along the U. P. road but the tracts owned by the B. & M. were remarkably fine and were offered to settlers at low prices on long credit without interest. It was B. & M. railroad land therefore and the site of the newly platted O'Connor and the station of Halifax that Bishop O'Connor selected when the Irish Catholic Colonization Association commissioned him to procure colony lands in Nebraska.

[&]quot;Circular, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁴⁵ See map, p. 60.

^{**} Pittston Gazette, April 17, 1877 (Letter from P. Hynes), Onahan Scrapbook.

⁴⁷O'Connor is first mentioned in the Catholic Directory for 1880 as a mission of Gleason, Platte Co., J. M. J. Smythe, pastor.—Unpublished MSS., Msgr. Shine's Papers.

In 1880 Nebraska offered the nearest and most accessible government and railroad grant lands to the immigrant and colonist from the seaboard.—Onahan, "Catholic Movement in Western Colonziation," American Catholic Quarterly Review, July, 1881, p. 439.

In 1880 Bishop O'Connor, accompanied by Patrick Hynes and Michael Sullivan, traveled through the B. & M. land inspecting it carefully and then bought 25,000 acres in tracts that were scattered through a great part of Greeley County and extended into four townships. The colony was really a detached chain of farms stretching south of Spalding (Halifax) to O'Connor and then west, having these two towns for focal points. The land, divided into 160 and 80 acre farms and surrounded by government and railroad land open to all comers for purchase and settlement, was sold promptly to 200 families. These, with the 100 families that located on contiguous land and the 25 original settlers, formed within four years a Catholic community of about 2000 persons. The set of the

The intention at first had been to lay out the farms on the plan adopted in Adrian, but it was decided that it would be best to allow

⁴⁸ Catholic Citizen, October 6, 1881 (Article by W. J. Onahan), Onahan Scrabbook.

[&]quot;Bishop O'Connor was the founder and creator of the undertaking. He wisely made choice of the location; he undertook the burdens and labor of organizing the colony, and he was its steadfast champion from the beginning. Bishop O'Connor's name and memory should be held in the most grateful remembrance by the settlers of Greeley County especially. How great was his pride in that settlement, and how unfailing his confidence in the future of the colony, I had constant proofs during the lifetime, and especially in the last years of that dear and venerated bishop." Onahan to Father Devos, April 18, 1892. Onahan Scrapbook.

Onahan in Catholic Standard. December 6, 1884.

⁴⁹ Spalding as a town came into existence when the post-office first bore that name in 1881—Spalding *Democrat*, October 2, 1914. At the meeting of the Board of Directors, of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association in January, 1880, it was voted to give the name of Spalding to the settlement on the Cedar river whose post-office was then called "Halifax." For a time the name was spelled "Spaulding" but the correction was made in response to the protest of Bishop Spalding.

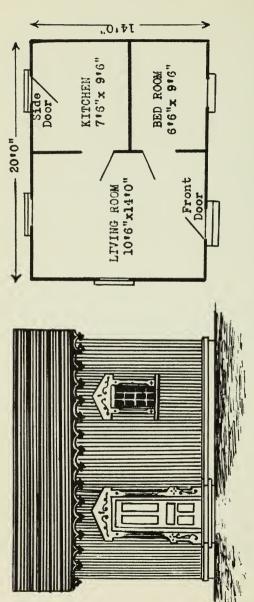
Onahan in Catholic Citizen, October 6, 1881 and in Catholic Standard, December 6, 1884, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁵⁰ Under the Homestead Law 160 acres of government land could be acquired by paying a fee of \$14 for entering a claim and \$4 for the deed, and then living on the property and cultivating it for five years.—Catholic Review,

then living on the property and cultivating it for five years.—Catholic Review, March 6, 1880 (quoting Bishop O'Connor to P. H. Barry in The Pilot).

Likewise any person over twenty-one was entitled to the privilege of taking up 160 acres of vacant and unoccupied land under the Timber Culture Act.—

Ibid.



A PORTABLE HOUSE

"Admirable frame houses, 14 x 20, 'rain, wind and waterproof,' having three rooms, can be bought in the colony for about \$200. These houses are made in Chicago, without nail or screw, are portable, and do not require a skilled workman to put them together, or take them apart. They do not need plastering inside, a -Catholic Colony, Greeley County, Nebraska. hurricane can make no impression on them, and, if painted regularly, will last for a century.

the colonists to select and lay out their land as they wished. In fact it seemed expedient to purchase scattered tracts,⁵¹ for thus not only could they procure the best land but they could at the same time leave opportunity for other colonists to acquire the intervening farms. There was no intention of having exclusively Irish or Catholic colonies. The Catholic colonies were designed to be the nucleus that would fix the character of the settlement and that would provide for the Catholic settler the indispensable Catholic church and school. Special assistance was offered to Irish Catholics because at that time they needed it most. However, there was no wish on the part of the directors of the Colonization Association to debar persons of other race or creed from settling among those sent out by them, and as a matter of fact, all the Nebraska, Minnesota, and Arkansas colonies embraced in their composition the usual admixture of Americans and foreigners.⁵²

The lands were graded according to value, the schedule prices ranging from \$1.25 to \$5.50 per acre. If at any time a purchaser wished to pay in full for his land he was permitted to do so. A discount of 20% was allowed for cash. In time purchases it was required that \$50 be paid down on each contract, the balance to be paid in six equal annual installments with 6% interest. The company advanced the price 25% per acre over that paid to the railroad so as

⁵¹ It was neither possible nor practicable to secure a well-defined tract of land because actual or quasi-settlers had long since taken up the most desirable government lands and the sale of railroad lands to settlers and speculators had divided up the country pretty well.—Onahan in *Catholic Standard*, December 6, 1884.

⁵² Onahan, "Catholic Movement in Western Colonization," American Catholic Quarterly Review, July, 1881; Onahan in Catholic Citizen, October 6, 1881, Clipping in Onahan Scrapbook; Editorial, Catholic Citizen, October 1, 1881, Onahan Scrapbook.

Those who purchased land from the Association in Greeley County were of Irish, American, German and English birth. One was from New Zealand. Clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

Near Spalding are the Polish settlements of Posen and Warsaw. They are thoroughly Polish; the Irish settlements are thoroughly American. It was Mr. Reade, a Protestant, and "one of the best men in the colony" who used to take Father Smythe to and from his mission stations.

to be able to erect a church, a parish house, and an immigrant depot for the temporary shelter and convenience of colonists. Sales were made only to actual settlers and were limited to 160 acres. In a few cases tracts of 80 acres were sold.53

The local agent was Patrick Hynes, who was greatly assisted by the pastor, Rev. J. M. J. Smythe.⁵⁴ Father Smythe was a man of great generosity who traveled throughout the United States for the benefit of his community and who was untiring in his endeavors to locate families and render them all needed assistance. "Bishops and priests lectured, the Secretary carried on an immense amount of correspondence, but Father Smythe was doing the main work, traveling far and wide to see intending emigrants, and driving over the prairies to locate them." 55

"Pat" Hynes had accompanied the miners that O'Neill brought out from Pittston, Scranton, and Wilkesbury in the late 'seventies, and some Irish farmers came from around LaSalle and Streator in Illinois. These prepared to receive and assist new-comers. An emigrant house was brought out from Chicago and hauled from Grand Island to Mr. Hynes' homestead. There he and his wife lived and took in immigrants when they arrived.⁵⁶ This house was later moved to the town site of O'Connor. It was adapted to the accommodation of ten or twelve families, and many more received temporary lodging among the settlers.57

⁵³ Pamphlet, The Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States, Greeley County, Nebraska.

Father Smythe was ordained in 1876 and given charge of a territory that included Boone, Greeley, Valley, Sherman and Howard Counties. On November 19, 1877, he celebrated the first Mass in O'Connor in the sod house of Patrick Hynes. There were no bridges, so it was necessary to drive through the river and in transit the vestments became water-soaked, but were dried, and a dry goods box, covered, served for the altar. Thereafter he officiated in O'Connor once a month until he was made resident pastor.—Unnamed, undated clipping, "History of Visitation Parish, O'Connor, Nebraska."

Devos, Unidentified clipping, April 9, 1901, Onahan Scrapbook.
 Interview, March 1929, T. P. Lanigan.
 Pamphlet, Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the U. S., Greeley County, Nebraska.

The town of O'Connor that was platted and filed by John O'Neill in 1877 was never built up. In 1880 a new O'Connor was laid out about three and one-half miles from the old one on a site selected by Bishop O'Connor. A church was put up in the spring. School had been taught in a sod schoolhouse about half way between the two sites by a Baptist minister in the summer of 1878. In 1880, shortly after the opening of the colony, Mr. Thos. P. Lanigan arrived and opened a school.58

The Nebraska colony lands had been opened in February, 1880, and that same month Patrick H. Barry of Boston wrote to Bishop O'Connor and to Patrick Hynes that under the auspices of the Boston Catholic Colonization Society he was planning to take fifteen families to Nebraska. These people were desirous of securing homesteads, so would not require any of the colony lands, but he requested information as to routes to Nebraska and the best time for going O111.59

Both the Bishop and Mr. Hynes advised him to locate in Wheeler County just north of Greeley because all the land there belonged to the government and the settlers were few. They should leave their families in Grand Island and go on to Wheeler County, select lands, return to Grand Island to file their claims, and then return.60

⁵⁸ Although only twenty-seven years of age at the time Mr. Lanigan had been engaged for three years in the manufacture of Bessemer steel in Chicago, had spent some time in Montreal and some in New York City, had attended school and taught in Wisconsin, and been a student at the University at Madison for two years. He went to Nebraska for his health, met John Fitzgerald, the railroad contractor, in Lincoln, and was directed by him to Greeley County. There, besides teaching school, he served as Justice of the Peace and tried the first case in O'Connor. He was County Treasurer in 1881. Both he and Patrick Hynes opened stores in O'Connor in 1880—Andreas,

p. 929; interview, Mr. Lanigan.

**Octholic Review, March 6, 1880, (quoting The Pilot).

**O(1) The railroad had not yet been run to St. Paul, and Grand Island was better for their purpose than Columbus because Wheeler County was in the Grand Island district.

⁽²⁾ In his letter Mr. Hynes, stating that it would be necessary to pass through Greeley County and that O'Connor would not be much out of the way, urged Barry to stop off and visit the colonists. They might have something worthwhile to tell him. Catholic Review, March 6, 1880, (quoting The Pilot).

Wheeler County offered special advantages for grazing, so Bishop O'Connor advised Mr. Barry and company to purchase all the stock possible and herd it, assuring him that the stock business of Nebraska was one of the best in the country—the animals could be pastured for ten months and fed on wild hay the other two; they did not need shelter. If fed from 80 to 100 bushels of corn before selling they could bring the market price anywhere in the State. 61 The best time to go out, they told him, was about March 1. Thus the cabins could be built and made ready and the families brought out before breaking time in June. The Boston colony came to Greeley but went on up the river into Wheeler County and founded the little town of Erina.

Meanwhile the colony lands were rapidly filling up. Fifteen or more families came in groups. 62 The best way to reach O'Connor in 1880 was to take the U. P. to Grand Island or Central City and take the wagon road from there. After July, 1880, one could take a mixed train to St. Paul and go thence twenty-five miles to O'Connor. A remarkably fine description of St. Paul 63 and of a journey to and through the Catholic colonies is found in an 1880 number of the Omaha Herald.64 The writer gives us a vivid picture of the country and the people—the beauty and fertility of the former and the prosperity, thrift, and intelligence of the latter. All apparently had known city life and gave many evidences of refinement. They were happy, contented, hospitable, and all were doing well.

A visit was paid to the colonies at about the same time by the Special Correspondent of the Chicago Tribune. His description is

⁶¹ Catholic Review, March 6, 1880 (quoting The Pilot).

⁶² Interview, March, 1929, T. P. Lanigan.

St. Paul was a growing town at that time. In July, 1880, the St. Paul branch of the U. P. road was completed and the development of the town proceeded rapidly. There were about 600 inhabitants well supplied with stores, two hotels, two or three saloons, good lumberyards, and a livery barn where people hired a "rig" and drove out to Greeley.—Interview, Mr. Lanigan.

"** Catholic Review, August 14, 1880 (quoting the Omaha Herald).

equally fine. This visitor, writing from O'Connor, tells us that although there were in the place some pretty frame houses they were no prettier than many of those built of sod. Some of the latter had been so well constructed that both the interior and exterior presented a wall so smooth as to admit of being plastered and whitewashed. "Thus finished and surmounted by a roof sloping to the ends and sides they present not only the appearance of solidity, but also of beauty, and lend an indescribable charm to the pastoral beauty of the scene." 65

For farm work and for travel the colonists used oxen. They were more useful and less expensive than either horses or mules. They would work on grass until after the middle of May while horses and mules required grain or hay if to be kept in working condition, and the purchase price of oxen was less. 66 They were also better adapted to the work of opening up new farms.⁶⁷ The initial outlay for harness, wagon, breaking plow and harrow, amounted to about \$200.68

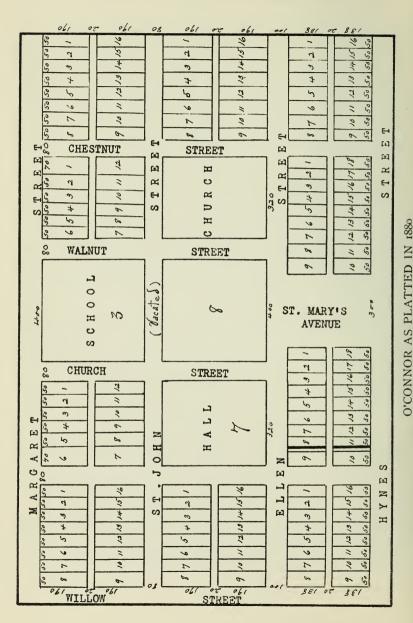
The settlers were all poor—some settled on homestead lands, some on colony lands. A few Catholic families came direct from England but only two of these stayed, whereas all the others remained. Most of these latter were from eastern cities of the United States. Those from Pennsylvania brought some money; those from Iowa and Illinois brought implements as well as experience. They and the early settlers helped the city people in many ways. Nevertheless there were hardships, of course. St. Paul was twenty-five miles away, Grand Island and Central City each about fifty, and it was to these places they must take their produce and in them purchase needed supplies. Nor was the exchange always to

68 Ibid.

⁶⁵ Chicago, Tribune, August, 1880, Scrapbook clipping.

⁶⁶ A team of horses cost from \$160 to \$200 and even as much as \$400; mules from \$200 to \$250; oxen from \$90 to \$100.—Catholic Review, March 6, 1880, (quoting Hynes in The Pilot).

Tatholic Review, March 6, 1880, (quoting The Pilot).



their advantage. When butter was selling in Omaha for forty cents a pound they would take theirs many miles and receive fifteen cents for it. They would take their eggs "to town" and be unable to sell them. Before the railroad reached St. Paul, one Mrs. McManus used to walk the fifty miles to Grand Island carrying hers. ⁶⁹ In the very early days men walked to St. Paul for flour and carried it back. When crossing the river they placed it on their heads to keep it dry. Of course when a man with a team went he bought for all his neighbors, so after the colony arrived the hardship of the trip to Grand Island or Columbus for supplies was considerably mitigated. After the railroad reached St. Paul the journey was much shorter and finally late in the year 1880 the stores of O'Connor obviated the necessity of making the trip except with produce.

Few of the settlers knew anything about prairie farming. Consequently at first they had some trying if amusing experiences with the soil and with the oxen.

From the first the Indians were good to them.⁷⁰ They gave an elk to the first group that came and showed them how to care for it. When they killed a deer they divided it with the settlers. They were a common sight there in the late 'seventies but never showed the O'Connor people anything but kindness.

There was generous co-operation, too, in the relations of the colonists with one another. Owing to the nature of the settlement, its purpose and the influences that were fostering it, there was no roughness, only mutual helpfulness and encouragement. When new families were coming all helped to receive them. The story goes that Father Smythe once asked the men to build a house for an orphan family that was being sent out to them. Full of sympathy and with a right good will they set to work and on the day of the arrival of the family a fine house was ready and waiting. Although to the amazement of Father Smythe and the amused chagrin of the builders the

⁶⁹ Interview, March, 1929, Mr. and Mrs. T. P. Lanigan. ⁷⁰ The Pawnee Reservation was not far away.

"orphans" turned out to be a father with four stalwart sons and three grown daughters, the incident serves to demonstrate Father Smythe's attitude toward newcomers and the settlers' generosity.⁷¹

It was urged that men go out first and bring their families only when a fit abode had been prepared for them, still there were usually some to be provided for temporarily. Whoever had room would take them in. Mr. T. C. Phelan had built a comparatively large sod house. It had three rooms—a large kitchen and two bedrooms—was plastered, and had a wooden floor. His sister, who lived with him, was always prepared for company and never turned anyone away. There were only two beds in the house but she kept a pile of ticks and a supply of fresh hay or straw, and she would prepare as many beds as were demanded by the occasion. Sometimes there would be others besides newcomers in need of her hospitality. One day, for example, one of the colonists started for a well for water, was caught in a snowstorm and lost. He found Phelans' house at two o'clock in the morning, and although there were already six "guests" being accommodated, another tick was filled and the wayfarer kept until morning. Incidentally, he had tasted nothing but pancakes for weeks so she sent some bread home with him.72

In this sod house of theirs Miss Phelan put up ruffled curtains made from a quarter of a bolt of muslin that she had in her trunk and they were the talk of the countryside. Her neighbors in those days had, of necessity, contented themselves with papers at the windows.

Probably inspired by the appearance of the curtains, her brother told her one day that he wished she would bake bread and cakes and prepare anything else she could—that he was going to give a dance on their nice wooden floor. She was in consternation—there was so little she could prepare that would seem festive. There were rutabagas and potatoes and pork and cabbage in plenty, but almost

⁷¹ Interview, March, 1929, Mrs. Dewhurst of Greeley.
⁷² Interview, March, 1929, Mrs. Lanigan.

everyone had those. Anyway she managed the party. Then she wondered who would come. All were just getting settled, were on scattered farms, and had only oxen and farm wagons, if they had those, but Mr. Phelan said he would provide the company—and he did. People came from all directions. They came until the house was filled, and they danced until seven in the morning, when all quietly disappeared.⁷³ That was fifty years ago, but the memory of it is still fresh with the "old people" and especially the hostess who had feared the guests would not be properly entertained.⁷⁴

These gatherings became very common and contributed in no small measure to the general spirit of contentment that pervaded the colonies.

Their religion brought them together also. Before they had a resident pastor everyone came in for Mass once a month. After the services they cooked the dinner together and stayed all day.

They had to work hard, but they had plenty of common things to eat, they were independent, they knew that if they persevered they would prosper, and they were happy. There was no serious illness among them and no one died until after a resident priest had been provided; that is, not until they had weathered the first five or six years of pioneering.

The years following 1880 were marked by rapid development and increasing prosperity. By 1881 the population of the county, notably that of the Irish settlement at O'Connor, had advanced considerably. Spalding was growing, and another contingent of Irish had laid out a town in the Cedar Valley.⁷⁵ In 1881 Father Smythe was assigned to O'Connor with charge of missions in four surrounding counties. Spalding was attended three Sundays a month and Erina eight times a year. In June of that year the O'Connor church was blown down, but another was soon erected.⁷⁶ By 1882 there were scarcely any ox

 ⁷³ Mr. Phelan had a violin and three others brought theirs.
 ¹⁴ Interview, March, 1929, Mrs. T. P. Lanigan, the hostess.

⁷⁵ Andreas, op. cit., p. 928.
⁷⁶ Report of the Colonization Association, Onahan Scrapbook, 1882.

teams to be seen—practically all the farmers had horses and mules.⁷⁷ Settlers continued to come. Some who had "homesteaded" sold their farms for \$200, \$300, \$400, and \$500, and these were taken up at once. The Irish Catholic Colonization Association did not have nearly enough land to meet the continued demand. In 1882-83 a new church, 40 x 80, and a parish house, 28 x 40, were erected at a cost of \$5,288.52.⁷⁸ Each year Father Smythe made his report of the progress of the colony to the Association at its annual meeting and traveled and lectured in the East in the interest of Catholic colonization ⁷⁹

In 1885 Rev. Julius E. Devos was appointed pastor of O'Connor. The next year he was transferred to Spalding and Father J. F. Hayes was put in charge of O'Connor and Scotia.80 Shortly afterward the Burlington Railroad, which in 1882 had been built as far as Columbus and Central City, extended its line toward O'Connor. It almost reached the town, but suddenly the managers diverted the route to Greeley Center because O'Connor refused to give them onehalf the town-site. Thereupon O'Connor moved to Greeley and the railroad. The stores and all the town dwellings were transferred (a distance of five miles) and now when the visitor reaches the summit of the last hill that shuts him off from O'Connor he sees on all sides far-reaching fields of prosperous-looking farms and only a little group of buildings to mark the site of the town of fifty years ago. On an eminence is the church, and beside it the priest's residence. A little beyond, and also on an elevation, is the academy of the Sisters of Mercy. On one side is the parish hall, 30 x 80, that was built in 1800 and is now used for gymnasium purposes by the school, and on the other side, in a quiet valley, the cemetery. There are no streets or stores, or even a post-office, but on all sides great stretches of farm

⁷⁷ O'Connor Democrat (quoted in Catholic Review, August 26, 1882).

¹⁸ The Association furnished \$1248 of this: the colonists were able to take care of the remainder of the cost.

⁷⁹ Undated clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

⁸⁾ Devos, "Church Chronicles," undated clipping, Onahan Scrapbook.

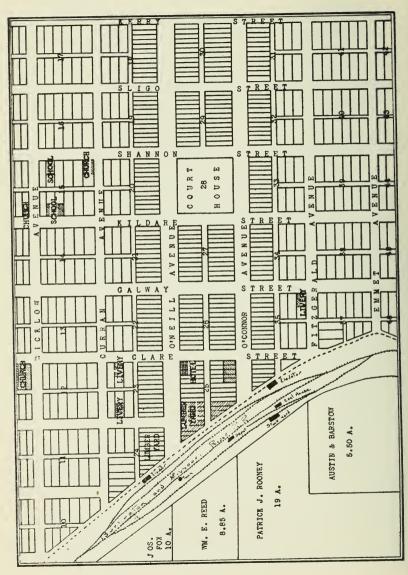
land surrounding homes of contentment. The light wind, the clear sky, the softly rolling hills that lose themselves in the distance, and the all-pervading atmosphere of peace, serve to lift one's thoughts from the things of time and set them upon those that are eternal.

The very scene seems that of another world and another time—in the center and lifted above the surrounding country, the church and the convent watching over and blessing the families that have made their homes in the valley. If perchance the visitor should arrive in mid-afternoon of a week-day his illusion is not dispelled. He would see emerging from the school 100 children, healthy-looking, with fresh happy faces and a friendly greeting, some setting off on foot for their homes, others, girls as frequently as boys, leaping onto a horse and flying over the smooth road and disappearing behind the hills—children all who had been saved for this by grandparents who had the courage, and the will, and the faith to listen to Bishop Spalding, Bishop O'Connor, and Bishop Ireland, who, knowing them and knowing the West, foretold for them just such a happy situation as is theirs today.

The railroad was a boon to Greeley Center, and its failure to reach O'Connor seemed at one time to the farmers there a great misfortune. However, with the advent of the motor car and truck the disadvantages of five miles from a railroad station rapidly disappeared and today one can not feel sorry that the rural beauty and peacefulness of the O'Connor valley is undisturbed by any harsher sounds than the call of birds, the voice of children, and the peal of the Angelus bell.

Somehow one feels that the great prelates who fifty years ago visioned the future of their people on the Nebraska prairies would smile upon O'Connor with a satisfaction as great as that wherewith they would survey Spalding and Greeley Center.

The latter town, which may be considered an extension of O'Connor, is the county seat, and has enjoyed a remarkably vigorous growth. Both the urban and rural population are predominantly



Irish, descended from those who went out in the 'eighties. They have courthouse, bank, and many kinds of stores and shops.⁸¹

The people have every reason to be proud of the church and pastor's residence, and the parish school is a fine modern building, which is surrounded on a school day by cars that bring families of children in from the country. It seems peculiarly fitting that the Sisters of St. Dominic from Bishop Spalding's home State, Kentucky, should have charge of this school and of those in Spalding, Cedar Rapids, and other communities of Greeley County. The culture and hospitable spirit of the true Kentuckian have combined with western "breeziness" and cheer to give a charm to these Sisters' homes that makes a visit to them a delightful experience. Because of the absence of a town, as such, at O'Connor, the number of Sisters is less than in the other centers, but that does not detract any from the gracious hospitality extended to the infrequent visitor.

The history of O'Connor is practically the history of Greeley Center. Many of the pioneers and the children of the pioneers are living there at present and it undoubtedly shares equally with O'Connor the glory of being a typically successful Irish Catholic colony.

⁸¹ At present the town is supplied with just about the right number of town buildings, stores and shops. Fewer would work some inconvenience; more would be unnecessary and therefore do some harm to the tradespeople.



Chapter VII

SPALDING, NEBRASKA

Spalding, as we have seen, began with Michael Sullivan and companions located on farms near the post-office station called Halifax.¹ The Indian experiences of this little group were not so pleasant as were those of Patrick Hynes and his companions in O'Connor, but apart from that the early hardships and struggles of the two little communities were not unlike. In the first years the railway stations nearest to O'Connor were Grand Island and Central City, each about fifty miles distant, while the nearest to Spalding was Columbus, some seventy miles away. In 1880 one railroad branch was run up to St. Paul and another to Albion, thus bringing a station to within twenty-five miles of each settlement.² It was to Columbus that Michael Sullivan drove for Bishop O'Connor, with oxen and lumber wagon when he first went out to survey the country.³

Spalding, with its surroundings, is particularly lovely. In the East one sees beautiful estates and much impressive natural scenery—wooded hills and mountains, and streams flowing through stretches of ever-varying woodland; in the States of the Middle West east of the Missouri are great quantities of level farm land with here and there a region of bluffs; in the far West are the desert and the rugged Rockies, the gardens and the orchards. In Greeley County, Nebraska, there is the peculiar formation known as the sandhills, and at their foot, beautiful valleys of unsurpassed fertility of soil. There is little timber except what has been planted by settlers, but there is something wonderfully attractive in the clear atmosphere, the

¹ Michael Sullivan died in 1880.—Spalding Enterprise, May 31, 1923.

² Spalding Grit, April 9, 1898, Sisters' Scrapbook.

³ Once, during a storm, Bishop O'Connor and several priests were entertained by Michael Sullivan for a week in his sod house on the banks of the Cedar.—Spalding Enterprise, May 31, 1923, Sisters' Scrapbook.

great distances, the hills and the rolling prairie of central Nebraska.

Spalding lies at the head of the Cedar Valley. The town site is set back about half a mile from the river, and the hills opposite shield it against the northwest winds, while the fertile valley lands can be seen for many miles to the east and the west. The Cedar River is fed by springs from its source to its mouth. This probably accounts for the remarkable purity of the water supply for that region.⁴

Until hydraulic wells were put in, the settlers in the hills were obliged to carry water in barrels and buckets from the valley or bring the stock down to the Cedar to drink. For awhile, too, the Spalding colonists carried water a distance of three miles or more. Then the first well was dug—three feet wide with a framework above and two buckets at the ends of a rope over a pulley. Later the width of the well was reduced to one foot and a windlass used; later still came the pump.⁵

At times things were "terribly hard," but always there was the element of hope that was wanting in the factories and the mines; and the kind of work, though laborious, was invigorating. Moreover, the children were in a healthful atmosphere, spiritually and physically. Always there was enough of good wholesome food even in the hard years, and the comfort that comes from congenial companionship.

⁴ It is so pure that it can be used for storage batteries. Not one case of typhoid has been contracted there, at least since 1905.—Interview, March, 1929, Father Galvin of Spalding.

⁵ Mr. Sheldon has perpetuated the memory of "Dutch Joe" Grewe, whom he honors with the title of "Hero of the Nebraska Frontier." This man came from Westphalia, Germany, to Nebraska in 1879 and within seven years dug 6000 feet of wells, ranging from 100 to 260 feet in depth. In 1894 he was killed in a well by a bucket full of level rock falling 200 feet on his head. Mr. Sheldon thus eulogizes him:

[&]quot;Men who risk their lives on fields of battle are justly held as heroes. Those who risk and lose them in the cause of making human homes in what was once a desert are also heroes. Among these I write the name of Joseph Grewe. Let no one who has never dug in the darkness and danger of a deep well dare dispute it."—Nebraska History and Record of Pioneer Days, Feb. 1918, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 5.

All suffered and denied themselves, and finally succeeded together.6

The reasons for coming to Nebraska were various. We have seen how ill health sent some out, but by far the greater number came for spiritual and economic reasons. They wanted a home and safe environment for themselves and particularly for their children, and they wanted to live where their savings would not be lost over night.⁷

The first Mass offered in Greeley County was celebrated by Father Ryan of Columbus, July 19, 1877, in the home of Michael Sullivan—part dugout and part sod house—in the presence of thirteen persons, some of whom had walked fifteen miles from Greeley and others eighteen from Dublin.

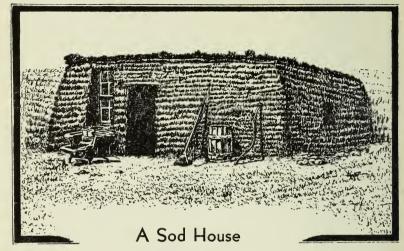
Deer were plentiful in the 'seventies. So, too, were Indians, but except for one brief period they did not molest the whites.⁸ The deer could be had for the shooting. In the early mornings they could be seen going down to the river to drink and it did not require much enterprise to provide oneself with good fresh meat at any time.

Everything in those early days—houses, clothes, food, and farming methods and implements—was simple, but entirely adequate to the needs of the pioneers. The only houses were of sod. In that country it was necessary to travel long distances to procure any wood. The men of Spalding had to go to the North Loup for it, a distance of forty miles. The trip took three days—one to go, one to cut and load the wood, and the third to return. Therefore, not only did prairie sod furnish the material for the construction of the first

⁶ Interview, March, 1929, Rev. B. Galvin.

Interviews, March, 1929, P. T. Naughtin; J. Ballweg.

⁸ In the museum of the Nebraska Historical Society is a beautiful square piano that was presented to the Society by Loretto M. Ferguson, whose mother had taken it out to the prairies with her. A note affixed to the instrument tells us that many times when she (the mother) would be playing the room would become darkened and she would see Indians standing in the windows. She often called them in and played for them. Miss Ferguson has done good service in endeavoring to preserve historical data of the early colonization period.



How to make it

The size of the desired house, probably 16 x 20 feet, was measured off. Then with a breaking plow the sod was cut two or three inches thick and laid in two parallel rows on the place marked for the wall. Shorter pieces of a length to correspond with the desired width of the wall were laid cross-wise on the first row, and this process continued until the walls had reached a height of seven feet. The gable ends were filled up in the same way at a pitch of about one-fourth and interstices left in the walls for windows and a door. Then three crotches of timber about fourteen feet long were procured, a pole was run through the crotches along the saddle of the house, and other poles were placed as rafters from the walls to the ridge-pole. Brush was laid on the rafters, prairie hay on that, and then long, thin sods, fitting closely down over the eaves. If desired, there could be a double roofing of sods. All was overlaid with a covering of the clayey sub-soil, two or three inches thick, then the door and windows were fitted in, the sods trimmed down with a hay knife, and the inside plastered with a mixture of hay and clay, or sand and clay. This made a house that was warm and dry in winter and cool and dry in summer. Weeds and even flowers sometimes grew on the roof. The house did service for about five years, when it would begin to crumble; but in the meantime the industrious farmer would have been able to build a frame dwelling to take its place.—Catholic Review, August 7, 1880; interviews with pioneers.

Note: The house described corresponds to most of those built in Greeley County and was more picturesque than the flat-roofed Dakota house, such as is pictured above, but the method of construction was essentially the same for both.

little houses, but also the earliest church services and the first classes were conducted in "soddies." 9

These people did not wear elegant clothes, but they did not need them. Their food was plain, but nourishing and plentiful. When they could not get meal they would crush their own corn and make cornbread. There was always a supply of pork and potatoes. One would kill a hog and divide it among four or five neighbors; another would kill one and give it around. There was always enough, even in the worst year after the drought of '94.

Breaking the ground was difficult and slow, especially for hands unused to that kind of work. In fact, all the farming was crude. When it came to binding the grain it was done at first on the ground—later on a sort of platform. Now, of course, it is done with machinery, and a man can accomplish in two or three months what would have taken a year in those days. They could only care for twenty-five or thirty acres of corn in the first years. When they shucked it a grown-up would work on each side of the wagon while the small boy went along behind to care for the row there. They cut hay with scythes, but were able to provide all they needed. They kept only two oxen or horses, and two or three cows.

Naturally their distance from the railroad entailed a certain amount of hardship. The mail was brought twice a week from Scotia through Greeley to Spalding.¹² If the weather happened to be

⁹ Interview, March 3, 1929, Mr. J. Ballweg. (Mr. Ballweg arrived in Spalding, March 3, 1879.)

¹⁰ Even when bread could be procured they were not always sure of enjoying it. The story is told of two men who one day undertook a long horseback journey to get some of Mrs. Cronin's baking. While crossing the river on the way home the horse of the man who carried a large paper flour sack filled with two kinds of biscuits stepped into a hole and went over on his head. His rider was precipitated into the water, but he struggled desperately to save the precious bag. However, when he could hold it up no longer the bread was sacrificed in the interest of personal safety.—Interview, March, 1929, Mr. P. T. Naughtin, one of the luckless riders.

¹¹ Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Ballweg.

¹² Ferguson, Spalding Enterprise, May, 1923, Sisters' Scrapbook.

bad it came only once a week or not at all. It was put into a barrel in the post-office and everyone selected his own.¹³

In the beginning they were obliged to go seventy miles to Columbus or seventy-five miles to Grand Island for provisions and to dispose of their produce. Even in 1880, after the U. P. railroad reached Albion (twenty-five miles from Spalding) either two days were consumed in making the trip from Spalding to the station and back, or the journey was begun at two or three o'clock in the morning and after the load had been disposed of a little lunch of five cents worth of crackers, ten cents worth of bologna or cheese, with sometimes a glass of beer, was taken to the wagon and eaten and then the return trip begun.¹⁴

The men hauled all the lumber from Columbus for the first church (1880) and for the dance pavilion for the first Fourth of July picnic (1883). In 1883 the road was projected to Cedar Rapids and in 1888 to Greeley, twenty and fifteen miles away, respectively. From then until 1904 these two towns supplied Spalding with most of its provisions. Regular visits to the "market-town" were considered part of the program in Spalding life up to the time its railroad came, and these long trips over all kinds of roads and during all kinds of weather furnish material for an interesting chapter of her history.¹⁵

From the beginning they had schools. The fall term lasted from

¹³ Interviews, Dr. Murt Sullivan; Mrs. Mary Connell, March, 1929.

¹⁴ Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Joseph Ballweg.

¹⁵ Interview, March, 1929, Mrs. Mary Connell; Spalding Democrat, October 4, 1914; Spalding Enterprise, January 24, 1903, Sisters' Scrapbook.

Even at the end of the long and arduous journey they found the returns for their produce uncertain. One year they paid 80c a bu. for seed and sold their crop for 52c. One man took a load of oats to Albion (two-days' trip) and received 15c a bu. for it. Another took his to Cedar Rapids and because he had carried it that far the buyer took it from him for 7c a bu. but told him not to come back. They took eggs, expecting to sell them for 4c a doz. but were obliged to carry them home again. They sold their wheat generally for about 33c a bu.—Interviews, March, 1929, Messrs. Sullivan, Naughtin, and Ballweg.

September to December and the spring term opened in March. During the months of no school the boys hauled every day. It was some time before they could afford horses so the oxen had to carry the loads. They found it particularly hard to endure the heat of the sand and if the driver was not careful one or both might drop dead on the road. Therefore in the summer the start must be made at about two o'clock in the morning so as to avoid traveling in the "heat of the day." However, the problem of getting provisions was not so great a one as at first thought might appear. As in O'Connor, one man's trip to town did service for all, and the first man to own a team of horses became the regularly commissioned purchaser for the colony.¹⁶

There were no drug stores, and no doctor nearer than O'Connor, and for all practical purposes he might have been in another State. Liniments and other remedies must be kept in the house, and if one person needed medicine he knew that if another had it all he need do was go for it.¹⁷ One of the earliest settlers who had always wanted to be a nurse, was given ample opportunity to exercise her bent here. She kept her drugs and was always ready. Her conclusion to her narration of various accident cases that she treated was, "In these days they would have died of blood poisoning; then with my warm water and liniment I cured them." ¹⁸

Indeed a special Providence seemed to watch over the little community. One of the many stories that illustrate this is that of one of the Sullivans who while herding cattle came one day to a dry well eighty feet deep. He saw it too late but tried to jump his pony across it. Not quite making it, the pony slid down backwards with Jack on his back. His body drove the "damp" out of the well sufficiently to prevent suffocation and although the pony kicked himself to death in

¹⁶ Interviews, March, 1929, Mr. John H. Sullivan, P. T. Naughtin, J. Ballweg.

¹⁷ Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Ballweg.

¹⁸ Interview, March, 1929, Mrs. Connell.

three hours, his one-time rider was still safe when he was discovered and drawn up.19

Often the nearest neighbor was three-quarters of a mile away or farther, but a sort of telephone system was established. In the evening the boys would lay their heads to the ground to hear the news; what one did not get another did. Then they would run to a hill and shout it to the nearest neighbor after giving a signal that would rouse the dog. This neighbor sent it on in the same fashion.20

And they were happy. Every pioneer to whom one speaks has a story of struggle and privation, but each one smiles at the reminiscence and concludes with the assertion that they were contented and hopeful. One man who grew up with the colony protests that his childhood was genuinely happy. The children did not know they were enduring privation; there was plenty to eat, plenty of fresh air, plenty of work of a strengthening kind, plenty of warm if not elegant clothing, and plenty of wholesome companionship.21 There was a good baseball team, there were picnics, and there were plays.²²

With the development of the farms and the opening of stores the difficulties of the settlers were considerably lessened, though occasionally misfortunes would come. There were adverse conditions in 1883, but whereas that year several farms were given up in the Adrian Colony, Minnesota, not one failure was reported for Nebraska.23 In 1885 there was a hard season again, but all persevered through it. There was a severe storm in '88—the most severe in the

 ¹⁹ Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Naughtin; Mr. Ballweg.
 ²⁰ Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Ballweg.

Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Ballweg.

Interview, March, 1929, Mrs. Connell (member of the choir). The church choir achieved considerable fame both for its singing and for its acting. One year for St. Patrick's Day the members presented She Stoops to Conquer. The story of its success traveled and soon they were called to O'Connor to put it on, and then to Greeley. They once gave a play at Cedar Rapids to help build the church for the little congregation there.—Mrs. Connell.

²⁸ Report of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association, May, 1883, Onahan Scrabbook.

recollection of those living in Spalding at that time.²⁴ Before the storm abated many cattle and sheep had been lost.

In 1890, 1893 and 1894 there were disastrous droughts, especially in western Nebraska,²⁵ but Spalding did not suffer much until in 1894 there was a complete failure of crops. During three days of July the land was like a hot stove, and practically all the crops were burned. The best corn averaged one bushel to the acre. A carload of grain was sent in for seed. Those who had any would not take it; the others were given thirteen bushels apiece.²⁶ Of course, this

²⁴ The blizzard came so suddenly that it seemed as though a blanket had been wrapped around the house. Mr. Welch succeeded in getting the children from the school into wagons and returning them all safe to their homes. Mr. Ballweg, who was ten years old at the time, tells how his mother went out to get the cows, and how he, grown anxious, went for her. He found her and they returned to the house only to discover that the father had been in and then gone out after them. They forthwith set out again to search for him. Finally they all returned safe, even bringing the cattle with them. The storm continued until three o'clock the next morning when the temperature dropped to thirty or forty degrees below zero.—Interviews, March, 1929, John Welch, Joseph Ballweg.

Mr. Welch says it was a lecture of Bishop Spalding's in Chicago that induced him to go out to Spalding—that he was dissatisfied at first and returned to Chicago, but soon went back to Nebraska, there to remain, perfectly satisfied.

The losses in crops and consequent sufferings were so great that the State legislature of 1891 authorized the issuing of \$100,000 in 4% bonds for the purchase and distribution of seed grain and other supplies. It also appropriated \$100,000 from the State treasury for immediate relief and authorized counties to give all possible assistance. Within six weeks supplies were distributed in thirty-seven counties to about 8000 families. The legislature of 1895 appropriated \$50,000 for food and clothing and \$200,000 for the purchase and distribution of seed and feed. This time 30,000 families in sixty counties received help. Donations amounting to nearly \$29,999 were received from people of other States.—Watkins, Outline of Nebraska History, p. 44.

²⁶ Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Ballweg.

a. This is worth contrasting with the experience of a Bohemian colony of Boyd County. These families had little more than \$50 apiece at the start and consequently they passed through a period of severe suffering. They had no wagons—they used a sleigh even in summer over the long slippery grass. They were obliged to go for provisions thirty miles or more and then were not sure of getting them—they had so little money. In the winter of 1893-94 there was little snow, the spring was dry, and then there came a late fall; there was a terrible drought and no crop. The settlers had no reserve supplies and there were no markets nearer that O'Neill or Atkinson or Stuart

supply helped, but it was not nearly enough, so during the spring of 1805 the pastor and some laymen went to Illinois to solicit grain for seed and feed. Their mission was successful; everyone put in a crop and the bad year was soon forgotten.27 In '95 the crop was good; in '96 there was a "bumper" crop. 28 An irrigation ditch was started as an insurance aganist possible damaging droughts in the future, but it was not finished or ever used.29

In general the crops were good, and almost anything could be raised profitably. One farmer planted three acres in sugar beets and produced twelve tons per acre, bringing a return of \$153.30 At another time he made a net profit of \$90 an acre on them. There is a beet sugar factory in Grand Island and one in Norfolk, so the disposition of them is not a problem.

(Stewart on the old maps), all thirty or forty miles distant. They went to Stuart where they lodged in barns and ate bread and water. Help was sent in —grain, provisions and clothing, for the transportation of which the railroads had charged nothing. Others had come from all directions for supplies, and the bold secured them. The most needy received nothing. Among these latter were the Bohemians who, foreign and timid, were pushed aside and given only the leavings. They themselves then sent to Minnesota and received help from their countrymen there. A carload of grain was sent to O'Neill for them and was divided fairly. Some received help also from their own people in Iowa.—Rosisky, History of the Bohemians in Nebraska, Unpublished Manuscript in the library of the Nebraska State Historical Society, pp. 210-219.

b. After the Spalding crop failure a boy of sixteen went with a man to Albion to get the seed intended for the colony. They arrived, but the train had not yet come in. Next day it still had not come. They had no money so could not buy groceries and they would not ask for anything, so they passed the second day with nothing to eat. The third day the boy arose between four and five o'clock in the morning and started to walk the 25 miles home. The man waited, received a load from the train that came in at about 10 o'clock that morning and on the way back overtook the lad two miles from

home. Interview, Mr. Ballweg (boy).

The Devos, "Church Chronicles," (Article in clipping of Father Culemans).

Father Devos was the pastor of Spalding at that time.

28 They shelled it by hand, ran it through a fanning machine, hauled it eight miles and got eight cents a bushel for it.-Mr. Ballweg.

²⁹ Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Ballweg.

30 Ibid. The beets sold for \$4.25 a ton; the seed cost 15c a pound. He sowed 10 pounds per acre and paid 50c per acre for three tools furnished to cultivate the ground. Therefore the total outlay was \$3.00 per acre. The beet sugar manufacturers wait until the crop is raised to collect for seed and rental of machinery, so all the cash outlay is for labor.

Father Devos, the pastor from 1886 to 1904, and perhaps the greatest promoter of Spalding's resources, insisted that it was a great fruit-growing region and tried hard to introduce the industry.31 The conditions seem to be proper for it—the hills round about are not unlike the vineyard hills of Burgundy, the slopes and shelters seem adapted for fruit, and there is an abundance of it growing wild. Father Devos even induced some French and Belgian families to go there for the cultivation of the grape, but they did not prosper and all but two or three left.32 Therefore the conclusion drawn was that it was not a grape country. No other serious attempt of a like nature was made.

However, around Omaha vineyards are successful and conditions there are much the same as in Spalding. Other fruits could be grown profitably, too, but it seems that no one has bothered much with them. They are said actually to raise more apples in Nebraska than in Idaho but mostly for home consumption.33 Probably the real reason for the lack of interest in fruit-growing is that it would cost more to put in the trees and care for them than it does to buy good apples in southeastern Nebraska. Ordinarily the returns from a corn crop on a small piece of land will buy enough apples to supply a family for two years.34

Oats, wheat, rye, barley and potatoes can be raised easily. Even tobacco will produce a good crop, and one man raised cotton. Alfalfa grows better in Greeley County than elsewhere. Wheat was raised at first when the land was fresh; and it was very good. The farmers have not raised so much of late years but now a very successful flour mill is in operation on the Cedar at Spalding and the manager, Mr. Vandenberg, pays the Spalding farmers thirteen cents

³¹ Interview, March, 1929, Dr. Murt Sullivan; Spalding Enterprise, Jan. 24, 1903, Sisters' Scrapbook.

Interviews, March, 1929, Father Galvin; Mr. Lanigan.

sa Around Spalding those who have orchards let them take care of themselves. If the trees bear, all right; if not, all right. Owners and neighbors use what they want and the stock consume the rest. Interview, Dr. Sullivan.

44 Interview, March, 1929, Dr. Sullivan.

more than the market price for their wheat, thus paying the same for what he ships in as for what is bought there. The result is that more attention is being given to this crop.35

In the beginning the colonists raised potatoes to eat, and oats, wheat and corn to sell for provisions. They needed about all they could get for their crop in order to be able to live.³⁶ Later, but not for some years, they began to buy stock. Now everyone has his "bunch" of cattle. In fact, practically all are stock farmers, so raise corn and oats and alfalfa for feed. Conditions are good where one can raise hogs and corn with only a fence between, and cattle and alfalfa close together. These conditions prevail in Spalding. Hence these crops are needed; they pay best, so the farmers have not bothered much with the others of late years.³⁷ As a general thing they have been able to produce as much feed as was required for their cattle and hogs and yet have a considerable amount to ship. There are three elevators and usually they are full. In 1927 they shipped in corn and oats for the first time.38

There is a successful creamery and butter factory in the town. Besides what is sold in Spalding and vicinity (seven towns), 100,000 pounds of butter are shipped out every year. In the creamery, carbonated beverages are also manufactured.39

Father Devos wanted an alfalfa mill started. It could have been done, too, but it pays the farmer better to feed his alfafla to his livestock than to sell it.40 Almost all the farmers raise hogs and cattle;

³⁵ Interviews, March, 1929, Mr. Ballweg; Mr. Vandenberg. Mr. Vandenberg also furnishes all the electricity for the town from the Cedar. He regu-

larly produces 75 barrels of flour a day—could produce 100 if he wished.

**Interview, March, 1929, Dr. Sullivan.

In the early days they used corn for fuel; it was cheap and produced a splendid hot fire. They also used twisted grass.—Interview, March, 1929, Father Galvin.

³⁷ Interview, March, 1929, Father Galvin; Mr. Ballweg; Dr. Sullivan. ^{a8} Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Ballweg. ³⁹ Ibid. Mr. Ballweg is the owner of the creamery and factory.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

there are profitable turkey farms north of Spalding; ⁴¹ but there is not much sheep raising. Some argue that the land of the valley is too good to be turned over to sheep grazing and the hills are better for cattle. ⁴² However, those who have undertaken the industry seriously have made a success of it. ⁴³

The foregoing summary of the agricultural history of Spalding, culled from interviews with those who have played a conspicuous part in it will give some idea perhaps of the vast potential resources of Greeley County that proved a boon to the infant colony and a source of great satisfaction to its founders.

It was necessary that there be material prosperity, but the chief concern of the bishops was for the spiritual and intellectual well-being of their people. For this, provision was made from the beginning.

Spalding was a mission of O'Connor until 1886 when Rev. Julius E. Devos was sent to it as resident pastor. Among the missions attended from Spalding one of the most interesting is Erina, an oasis in the sandhills, fifty miles up the Cedar Valley in Wheeler County. This is the town that was established by General Barry and his party of twenty-six families in 1880.44 They built a frame church in 1887, the first frame building of that section. It was destroyed by a prairie fire, but speedily rebuilt. Thus they spent \$1000 in order that they might have Mass offered in their midst a few times a year.45

Arden, another mission near Spalding, was opened with ten

⁴¹\$15,000 worth of turkeys were sold by one farmer in one year.—Mr. Ballweg.

⁴² Interview, March, 1929, Mr. Vandenberg.

⁴³ Mr. Davlin became quite famous for his sheep raising. He often had as many as 500 at one time. Mr. Jim Phelan tried it successfully also. These men knew how to care for their sheep. Others who tried it did not. Always, too, there was danger from the dogs and coyotes. One man lost \$1000 worth of sheep from dogs; another lost 1000 in a snowstorm.—Interview, March, 1929, Miss Ella Davlin, daughter of the sheep raiser.

[&]quot;The Pilot, October 9, 1880.

⁴⁵ Devos, History of St. Michael's Church, Clipping, April 9, 1901. No such town exists now—only two or three ranches mark the site.—Dr. Sullivan.

families, Fullerton with twelve, and Cedar Rapids with thirteen. In the latter town, twenty miles by wagon road from Spalding, a church, 16 x 52, costing \$1450, was built in 1888.46 In 1885 a small brick church was built at Scotia.47

Until 1898, when it was incorporated and organized as a country village, Spalding continued to be a church colony,48 but the period of the development of its resources really begins with the advent of Father Devos as resident pastor. 49 This Belgian priest had been for years an ardent Catholic colonizer, and in the 'eighties he derived a special inspiration for the work from Bishop Spalding and his colleagues.

The work of colonization had been taken up by men whose names a few years ago were household words in the land. Great men in the church, as in the nation, seem to come in cycles . . . in the early days, Hughes and England; in our day, Ireland and Spalding. With these two Father Devos was associated in his colonization work. For twenty-three years he gave himself unreservedly to this work in the great Northwest. Like another St. Paul, he followed the

Bevos, op. cit.

This road followed the windings of the river-perhaps partly at least for the sake of the oxen that suffered so much from the hot sand of the road. When the railroad was extended from Cedar Rapids to Spalding in 1902 the track, 14 miles in length, crossed the wagon road 13 times.—Spalding Enterprise, November 1, 1902, Sisters' Scrapbook.

**Ibid.

Scotia was the county seat until it lost this distinction to O'Connor (later Greelev Center).

48 Spalding Enterprise, October 2, 1914; January 24, 1903; Sisters' Scrap-

⁴⁹ Father Devos was born in Belgium in 1848, studied at Louvain, was ordained, and then came to America in 1883 and served for a time as Belgian pastor of the Catholic colony of Ghent, Minnesota. He was pastor of the Irish Catholic colony of O'Connor in 1885, and of Spalding from 1886 to 1905. He became pastor at Alliance, Nebraska, in 1905 and of St. John Berchman's Church in Chicago in 1906. He was director of the Colonization Belgian Priesterbond in 1910, organizer and president of the Catholic Colonization Society of the United States of America in 1911, and in 1922 was made "chief" by the Chippewa Indians. He is the author of *The Three Ages* of Progress (1910), The Family Record (1912), The Belgian Nation (1919). Several years ago he retired and is now living quietly in California.-Pamphlet, Golden Jubilee of Father Devos, 1923.

different little bands of colonists, gathered them round some center, built the church, school and convent, drove across the pathless prairies twenty, thirty, or fifty miles, encouraged the strangers from many lands and of many faiths to have courage and patience and to grasp in time the opportunities that the greatest land on earth presented to them.⁵⁰

Father Devos was intelligent, energetic, zealous, and committed, heart and soul, to the temporal and spiritual interests of Spalding.

A frame church, 30 x 50, had been built in the town in 1882 at the cost of \$2740, of which \$1100 was contributed by the colony.⁵¹ The church was small but it was well attended and could boast an exceptionally fine choir. However, at the urgency of Father Devos the Catholics of the town, in 1890, commenced the erection of a permanent church, 50 x 104, and with a seating capacity of 700. Because it was necessary to haul all the building materials from Greeley, fifteen miles distant, the church was a frame structure,⁵² but it was of Gothic architecture in imitation of a fourteenth century Belgian church, and was a remarkable edifice for those days and on the open prairies. The cost of \$10,000 was bravely faced and met by the colonists.⁵³ The parish continued to grow until it was necessary to enlarge the church, and some years later, to build another.⁵⁴

McNamee, Address at Golden Jubilee of Father Devos.
 Devos, History of St. Michael's Church, April 9, 1901. Clipping.

At the October meeting of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association in

^{1881,} General Lawler donated two shares of stock and Bishop Ryan one share towards the erection of the church at Spalding. Bishop Spalding gave \$100 towards the same. An appropriation was also made by the Society for the purpose.—Catholic Review, October 15, 1881.

52 Devos, History of St. Michael's Church, April 9, 1901. Clipping. Fifteen

carloads of lumber were shipped into Greeley Center. Three hundred wagons were required to convey this to Spalding and for weeks a constant stream of teams entered the town with building materials.

one thousand dollars were paid the first year, but it was impossible to borrow money in the vicinity. Then two Germans came to the rescue. Fred Haun secured a loan of \$2000 from Wisconsin and Norbert Kunz bequeathed all his property to the church. The colony donated to the congregation the 160 acres on which the town was built, but cash was needed and the money panic and crop failures of 1893-95 made it unusually difficult to procure it. Still, in spite of the bad years, the money was raised.

**Devos, "Church Chronicles." Undated Clipping. (Dr. Culemans).

The Catholic community remained about half Irish and half German, with a few French people and Belgians, so at the missions that were given from time to time there were special conferences for the older German people. The young folks, of course, were perfectly familiar with the English.⁵⁵ At the present time Catholics comprise about 90% of the population. Most of the others are Presbyterians, but each congregation has helped the other when help was needed and no difficulties have arisen between them.

Apart from the up-building of the religious life of his congregation Father Devos expended every effort in the promotion of the material advancement of Spalding. For a long time he endeavored to introduce the village system of western Europe: home manufacturing, fruit growing and small farming. He believed it would pay the laborer better than the immense farms and huge factories of America and would leave the ordinary individual better provided for and more independent. Particularly did it seem well to introduce this system into Spalding because, in the first place, in spite of all its endeavors, the railroad held aloof until 1902, and secondly, because the fertility of the soil seemed preëminently fitted for diversified farming, the hills for fruit growing, and the Cedar River for manufacturing purposes.⁵⁶

An American village even in 1885 generally had only the trades essential to life, and depended upon the factories for most of its supplies, whereas in Europe there were not only butchers, carpenters, hotel-keepers, store-keepers and blacksmiths, but also bakers, tailors, shoemakers, wagon-makers, brick-makers, coopers, masons, tanners and broom- and basket-makers, and Father Devos knew that although hand-made articles in America as in Europe were more

⁵⁵ Spalding Enterprise, October, 1903. Sisters' Scrapbook.

At the first Mass of the first priest to be ordained from Spalding, 1897, sermons were preached in Flemish, German and English.

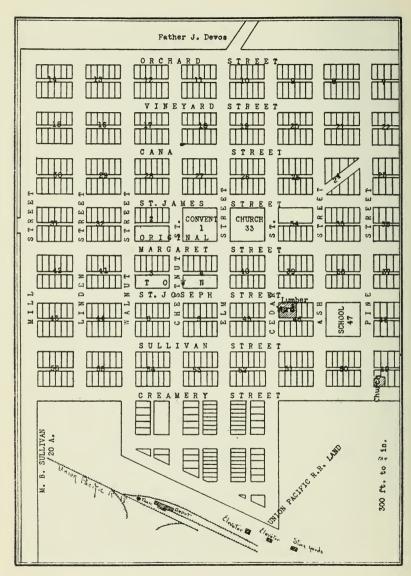
⁵⁶The Cedar falls seven feet to the mile, so there is a successful mill in operation at Cedar Rapids and another at Fullerton and one at Ericson. Mr. Vandenberg, the owner of the one in Spalding, says that there could be five plants between each two of these towns.

expensive than those that were machine-made, they were also better, and that the village tradesmen were far better off than the factory laborers, so he worked hard to convert his people to his plan. But we have seen that the farmers found stock-raising so economical and so remunerative that by far the great majority of them devoted themselves to it, and that meant the raising of large crops of corn, oats, and alfalfa at the expense of vineyard and orchard culture. Also, since they were obliged to haul their stock and surplus grain to the railroad, they found it convenient to carry back with them on the return trip provisions and other necessaries. When the railroad came in 1902 there were even stronger reasons for continuing the stock raising industry.

So Father Devos' dream of a village system was never realized—not because it would not have been successful but because it was never seriously tried.

His second great work looking towards Spalding's prosperity was his persistent effort to induce a railroad company to extend its line to the town. He talked "railroad" in Spalding and out of it. He appeared in offices of the companies in Lincoln in season and out of season. Whenever he encountered anyone connected with the railroad he made him listen while he discoursed on the possibilities of a line to Spalding.

In 1878 when the first survey for a railroad into Spalding was made, the hopes of the people were aroused to the possibility of securing one. Another survey was made in 1886 but again nothing resulted from it. The railroad reached Cedar Rapids in 1883 but for some unaccountable reason stopped there. Thereafter for nineteen years "Cedar" was the chief marketing town for Spalding. Time and again during this period funds were raised by popular subscription to send a committee to interview the officials in Omaha but nothing was done and many of the people, finding their hopes and expectations continually frustrated, became skeptical about the prospects of ever seeing a train in Spalding, and began to reconcile them-



selves to the thought of Spalding's remaining forever a little isolated village. Not so Father Devos. He agitated the question ceaselessly.

In 1899 the Western Construction Company of Chicago was building a railroad in the South and at the urgent solicitation of Father Devos consented to undertake the work of running one into Spalding. The people of the town were intensely interested in the project and voted bonds to the amount of \$21,000. The last they heard of the company was that it was negotiating the financial side of the enterprise with New York capitalists.⁵⁸

This same year a Mr. Perry of Atkinson declared his intention to construct a line from Cedar Rapids to Atkinson, and made the necessary survey. He then abandoned his original purpose and prepared to start the road at Grand Island instead of at Cedar Rapids. This change probably cost him the confidence of his financial supporters. At any rate, nothing came of the project.⁵⁹

In 1901 a Samuel Wallerton bought 40,000 acres of ranch land in Wheeler County and was informed that Spalding would be a convenient shipping point for his cattle. Forthwith he traveled to New York to see what could be done in the way of securing railroad facilities for Spalding. He was told that if a good crop matured that year the road would be built. Whatever happened the crops, at least the company's plans failed to mature.⁶⁰

The last movement began in Spalding itself. Mr. Yeaton moved into the colony in 1900 and started a lumber yard. He soon grew tired of hauling lumber and coal by team over the 20-mile winding road from Cedar Rapids and for some time seriously considered running a traction engine with cars for freighting purposes. His friends did not encourage the idea and he himself feared lest a railroad should be built suddenly and leave him with his expensive engine and outfit on his hands. Therefore at his suggestion a rail-

⁵⁸ Spalding Democrat, October 2, 1914, Sisters' Scrapbook.
59 Spalding Enterprise, January 24, 1903.

road meeting was held and a committee appointed to go to Omaha to interview President Burt of the Union Pacific Railroad.⁶¹

Mr. Burt paid a visit to Spalding and in company with Father Devos made a tour of the town and its surroundings. A few days later two members of the railroad committee were summoned to Omaha and the following proposition was submitted to them: The Railway Company would build the road from Cedar Rapids to Spalding providing they could obtain the right of way for \$25 an acre, the people of Spalding to pay all cost in excess of that amount and give the railroad all the vacant lots of the village belonging to St. Michael's Church, and sixty acres of land on the northern border of the town. This last condition was considered unjust and was not acceded to, and again the movement was nearly disrupted.

However, at this time the people were resolved to have the road, so they proceeded to buy options on the needed right of way from Cedar Rapids to Spalding and started a subscription list. Between eight and nine thousand dollars were needed, and the task of collecting that amount seemed almost insuperable. Only about \$3500 were raised, and as no agreement had been made regarding the 60-acre tract, Spalding began to feel discouraged. At that juncture, a group of determined men inaugurated a new campaign. Enthusiasm was revived, and when the railroad officials agreed to buy the "60" for \$100 per acre provided the Spalding people paid \$25 per acre of the amount, all thought of failure died, the subscription rose to \$9,043.75 (more than \$1000 in excess of the amount needed) and the arrival of a grading crew announced the final triumph of Spalding.

Only those who were familiar with the history of the inconveniences entailed to a farming community during long years of wagon transportation to a far-away station in a hilly country, and the courageous and persistent efforts that had been made in the face of

et Spalding Democrat, October 2, 1914; Spalding Enterprise, January 24, 1903.

continued discouragement and disappointment to bring in the railroad, could appreciate the fervor of the demonstrations of rejoicing that greeted the first train of cars that appeared in Spalding. 63

Within a month four trains a day were entering the town and giving splendid freight and passenger service. It was then and is still the terminus of the road, thus making Spalding a trade center with a much larger territory than any neighboring town. 64

In 1905 Father Devos was transferred to Alliance, Nebraska, and Father Galvin continued his work in Spalding. Since that time a beautiful new church and a remarkably fine convent for the Sisters have been built.65

As was the intention in the formation of the colony, its educational life kept pace with its religious, social, and economic development. At the outset three blocks of the town were donated by the Association for school purposes to the Brothers, the Sisters, and the common schools.66 In September of 1800 the Sisters of Mercy from Omaha arrived, and as practically all the children were Catholic they taught the two public schools, drawing public money. 67 The erection of the new church had been begun so the old church was converted into a school with two large rooms on the first floor and an assembly

^{**}Onahan, December, 1902. Cited by Sister M. Hamilton in Leaves from the History of the Nebraska Mission. (Unpublished MSS.)
***Spalding Enterprise, April 9, 1904. Sisters' Scrapbook.

The railroad company gave the town a block for a park, with the stipulation that it be used exclusively for that purpose. All the trees then as in the early years had to be planted, so Father Devos, after the trees were in, used to send the children of the catechism class to the river with little buckets and

have them water the trees.—Interview, March, 1929, Mrs. Connell.

⁶⁵ Spalding Enterprise, April 21, 1905. The pioneers still speak of Father Devos with the deepest affection and appreciation. At the time of his departure from Spalding the local newspaper declared: "Father Devos will be missed from this community as no other man would be, and no matter where he goes he will carry with him the blessing and devoted affection of a host of people of all classes and denominations." On the occasion of his Golden Jubilee celebration in Chicago, in 1923, a committee journeyed thither from

Spalding to present him with a purse, the gift of the town.—Dr. Sullivan.

Dr. Sullivan.

Dr. Sullivan.

Lipping. 67 Hamilton, op. cit.

room on the second. Father Devos turned his house over to the Sisters, and himself went to live in a small house with his brother.⁶⁸

For a decade the Sisters labored hard at the cultural side of Spalding's development. Besides teaching the parish and the district schools they trained the choir and worked with both the children and their elders in the preparation of dramatic and other entertainments.⁶⁹

It was found impossible to return the Sisters of Mercy to Spalding for September of 1900 but in the summer of that year Rev. Henry S. Spalding, S.J., a professor at Creighton University, visited Father Devos and suggested that he apply for the Dominican Sisters of Kentucky. Father Devos did so and it was arranged that they open school in September of 1901. In the meantime, Father Devos went to Belgium and in August, 1901, sent word to the substituting pastor to tell the Sisters to wait awhile, since the school was not yet ready for them. But this priest thought they might as well come anyway. Hence it was that when the first four, among them Sister Margaret Hamilton and Sister Dolores Spalding, both belonging to Bishop Spalding's family, arrived, they found the building entirely uneprepared. For awhile they used pews from the church in lieu of seats and in other ways accommodated themselves to the situation. In spite of inconveniences they were ready, and opened school on the first Monday of September, but the number of children was so great that before Christmas it was necessary to send two additional Sisters from Kentucky.70

In September, 1903, the Sisters opened an academic and commercial course in Our Lady of Lourdes school. They had already established a branch of the Euterpean Art Fraternity, and in music

⁶⁸ Ibid.

^{**} of this period was Sister Angela, a writer of merit, who, under the pseudonym of Gilbert Guest, has published many attractive and edifying books for young people.

⁷⁰ Hamilton, op. cit. Sister Dolores is on the Greeley teaching staff at present.

they taught violin, piano, and organ, and conducted a musical kindergarten. There was a school orchestra, and the Schumann Circle, in which all the music pupils were entitled to membership, held regular meetings at which, besides a program of musical selections by the members, lessons were given in theory and musical history and biography. There was a good musical library in connection with the department, and a general school library.⁷¹

The art department offered lessons in form, color, perspective, sketching, oil painting, water colors, china painting, and tapestry. An exhibit of the department was given each year. In the school there were also sodalities, a debating society, and a reading circle under the supervision of the State Department of Education. Embroidery and dress-making were taught, and sight-singing, physical training, and drawing lessons were given in all the class-rooms without extra charge.⁷²

In 1906 the first annual Summer School was held at the Academy under the direction of the Sisters. This institution offered to teachers and other students of Greeley and surrounding counties the best advantages in education. It was a public normal school conducted on normal school principles with the official approval of the State Superintendent, the County Superintendent, and the Deputy State Superintendent. Its object was to give such training and instruction as would enable teachers to meet the requirements of the State regulations in regard to normal training for teachers' certificates, offer an opportunity for teachers and students to raise their standards of scholarship, and improve the efficiency of teachers in our public and private schools.⁷⁸

Among those constituting the faculty in 1908 were W. M.

⁷³ Hamilton, op. cit., p. 57.

¹¹ A general Catholic library had been established in Spalding in 1886 with 400 volumes, many of which had been presented by Mr. Onahan of Chicago, Mr. Pustt of New York and Father Cashman of Chicago.—Devos, unidentified clipping, *Onahan Scrapbook*, 1901.

¹² Prospectus of Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, 1906.

Whelan of Lincoln High School, a graduate of the department of Education of Nebraska University, Miss Eva O'Sullivan of South Omaha High School who had taught in the State Junior Normals for four years, John O'Malley, principal of Greeley High School, Miss Mary Sullivan of Omaha High School, graduate of the University of Nebraska. Every Friday an outside lecturer was brought in. An Institute was held the last week of the summer term, during which a model school was conducted each afternoon.

The Spalding Academy Normal department has prepared hundreds of teachers for the State. In many of the districts of Greeley County all the patrons are Catholic and the children are instructed in the Christian Doctrine.74

In 1895 the Franciscan Brothers from Brooklyn were introduced into Spalding. They erected a monastery and organized an industrial school for boys. Apart from the regular scholastic training given, a prominent aim of the Brothers was to make the boys love country life and to teach them farming or a trade wherewith to make a living. They undertook also to fit for life in the city such boys as chose to cast their lot there. In 1901 there were as many students in attendance as the institution could accommodate.75

After the school had been in operation for about twenty years the Brothers opened Trinity College in Sioux City and because the field for students was so much greater there than in Spalding the Brothers were withdrawn from the latter place and the school was closed.76 At that time Our Lady of Lourdes Academy received only girls, so the boys were obliged to go to the public school. However, several years ago the Academy opened its doors to the boys. At present this school and the one in Greeley are each attended by about two hundred students. O'Connor, with only farming families to draw from, has one hundred.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 58, ff. ⁷⁵ Devos, History of St. Michael's Church, Clipping, April 9, 1901. ⁷⁶ Subsequently, the school in Sioux City was given over by the Franciscan Brothers and taken by the Brothers of Mary.

The Sisters of Mercy in O'Connor and the Sisters of St. Dominic in Spalding and Greeley concur in the statement that the children have always been peculiarly tractable, responsive, and quick to learn. Even to the casual visitor this is apparent. Upon entering the classroom in any of these schools one is struck at once by the beautiful appearance of the assembly. The children are well-ordered in every particular, and, taken as a whole, their faces and manner are singularly attractive. There is refinement, an alertness, a general healthful appearance, and a certain indefinable look of happiness about them that makes it a pleasure just to meet them.

All the children go through high school and then most of them go elsewhere for a college course. But instead of wishing to leave home, almost without exception they come back and settle down either to pursue a profession or to return to the farm.⁷⁷ This love for their home seems to be one of the strongest proofs that the colonization project was a success. Those of the younger generation are happy and contented, while their fathers have enjoyed such blessings as never could have been theirs had not *their* fathers responded to the invitation to "go West." When one asks the pioneers if they would pronounce the colony a success the unvarying answer comes: "Without a doubt!"

As was proven by some unfortunate experiences, the Irish do not thrive under patronage that is extended as a support to them. In the Nebraska colonies the means of taking care of themselves were placed within their reach. They accepted the offer and by dint of hard work and dogged perseverance they succeeded. The amount and kind of assistance to be given seems to have been estimated with almost perfect accuracy because no man was called upon to sacrifice his independence in any way, and yet no man failed.

These communities of Greeley County are not isolated. They

[&]quot;In 1930 in one of these schools a group of high school students debated the relative advantages of city life and life in such a community as theirs, and to the undisguised delight of the other children of the school the city lost overwhelmingly.

form an integral part of the commonwealth of Nebraska. Their men and women find their place in the social, economic, political, educational, and religious life of the State.

In the early days they had nothing, but they owed nothing. They were able to live and make enough to pay for their farms and achieve independence. As time went on they bought a second and a third and even a fourth and fifth farm. They built and supported their churches and schools and provided a thorough education for all their children. Their farms are beautifully kept and all are comparatively prosperous. They would be so really if they could depend upon the market for their produce.

The Greeley Colonies furnish a striking proof that Irish Catholic colonization can be and has been successful. They stand today a magnificent living monument to the memory of the men of vision who spent themselves cheerfully that their dream for the Irish-American poor might be realized—that those whom a prolonged and systematic oppression had deprived of all things but their heritage of faith might find in America independence and a home; that they and their children might enjoy the blessings of religion and education, and the opportunity to contribute their full share to the development of the democratic institutions of the land of their adoption and the preservation and spread of the Faith of their Fathers.

Bibliography

Interviews and Correspondence (See Preface)

MANUSCRIPTS:

Hamilton, Sister Margaret, Leaves from the History of the Nebraska Mission of the Sisters of St. Dominic, 1926.

Majors, Hon. T. J., Governor of Nebraska during the Catholic colonization period, Letters.

Minnesota Historical Society Collections, St. Paul, Minn. Nebraska Historical Society Collections, Lincoln, Neb.

Omaha Diocesan Archives.

Rosisky, R., History of the Bohemians in Nebraska, Nebraska Historical Society, 1928.

SCRAPBOOKS:

Rev. J. B. Culemans, Moline, Illinois.

Rev. D. O'Dwyer, Urbana, Illinois.

Wm. J. Onahan (forty were used), Chicago, Illinois. Sisters of St. Dominic, Spalding, Nebraska.

Spalding Institute, Peoria, Illinois.

John L. Spalding, Chicago, Illinois. Miss Marybelle Spalding, Chicago, Ill.

Newspapers: (See Preface for Catholic files)

St. Paul Pioneer Press (1880-1884).

New York Times (1877-82; 1884; 1888-89; 1893). Chicago Tribune (1877-82; 1884; 1888-89; 1893).

New York *Tribune* (1877-82; 1884; 1888-89).

True Voice, Omaha Twenty-fifth Anniversary Number, 1903-1928, December, 1928.

Periodicals and Proceedings of Societies:

Acta et Dicta, a collection of historical data regarding the origin and growth of the Catholic Church in the Northwest, St. Paul, 1907-1909.

American Catholic Historical Researches, III, (July, 1886). American Catholic Quarterly Review (1876-1916).

Annales de la Propagation de la Foi, Paris, (1876-1880).

Ave Maria, Notre Dame, Indiana (1877-1905).

Brownson's Review, 1873.

Catholic Historical Researches, April, 1886.

Catholic Historical Review, II (1916); III (1918-19); LV (1917).

Catholic World, (1877-1918).

Dublin Review, 1880.

Dublin University Review, 1887. Fortnightly Review, 1869, 1903.

The Forum, April, 1804.

Historical Records and Studies. Published by the United States Catholic Historical Society, I (January, 1899); X (1917); XIV (May, 1920).

Illinois Catholic Historical Review, 1918-1922. Mid-America, October, 1929; January, 1930.

Minnesota History, December, 1928. Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIII (1926-27).

Nebraska History and Record of Pioneer Days, edited by A. E. Sheldon, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1918.

North American Review, March, 1880; September, 1894. United States Catholic Historical Magazine, published by the United States Catholic Historical Society, New York, 1891-93.

Westminster Review, CXXXIII (1890).

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS:

Address of the Minnesota Irish Emigration Convention, St. Paul, 1869. Bagenal, P. H., The American Irish and Their Influence on Irish Politics, London, 1882.

Beecher, Lyman, Plea for the West, Cincinnati, 1834.

Circular of the Minnesota Catholic Immigration Bureau, St. Paul, 1878,

Guilday, Peter, Life and Times of John Carroll, New York, 1922.

Guilday, Peter, Life and Times of John England, New York, 1927.

Hansen, M. L., "The Second Colonization of New England," New England

Quarterly, II (1929).
M'Gee, T. D'Arcy, History of the Irish Settlers in America, Dublin, 1876. Northwest Colonization Company, Free Homesteaders, St. Paul, 1871. O'Hanlon, J. P., Life and Scenery in Missouri: Reminiscences of a Mis-

sionary Priest, Dublin, 1891.

Publishing Society of Minnesota, Minnesota in Three Centuries, 1655-1908. Roche, J. J., Life of John Boyle O'Reilly together with his Complete Poems and Speeches, New York, 1891.

Shea, J. G., Defenders of Our Faith, New York, 1892. Spalding, J. L., God and the Soul, Chicago, 1915.

Spalding, J. L., Religious Mission of the Irish People and Catholic Colonization, New York, 1880.

Standard Atlas of Greeley County, Nebraska, compiled and published by Geo. A. Ogle and Co., Chicago, 1904.

Zwierlein, F., Life and Letters of Bishop McQuaid, Rochester, 1927.











UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA 282H398I C002 The Irish Catholic Colonization assocati